

# THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1899.

## THE TOWER GARDENS.

### CHAPTER VI.

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH THE WILINESS OF AN INGENUOUS  
GENTLEMAN.

IT was the second morning after that evening, destined long to be remembered, on which Jessie Bayliss had added another severe scorching to the toes of her already scorched slippers, the evening of that sudden upheaval of John Harbuckle's buried affections and of the arrival of the man in the cab.

The wind had abated somewhat of the loudness of its clamour; but what it had lost in fury, it had gained in biting spite.

The firs and spruces around Mary Bayliss's house looked blacker, the grey clouds darker and colder, than ever; the very ground seemed suffering actual pain from the long, dreary winter, when the widow opened her eyes to a daylight that had grown hateful to her, and her heart to a fresh sense of calamity.

"Those girls! those girls! How they are coughing!" she said.

The stone walls of her house were thick, but yet she could hear that sound, and it smote not only her heart but her conscience.

"Ah! If I could only feel that I was not hurting my girls, the rest would matter little!" she sighed. She was afraid that all that long, dreary winter their clothing had not been warm enough, that she had made them live more hardly than girls used to home comforts could well bear.

"I wonder if that little calf is still alive?" she went on. "I can't understand how it is that all our stock dies! The animals, at any rate, never have to go without, whatever we may do; I can't blame myself for that; and yet they die! I can't understand it! I shall get rid of McQuade."

The widow made a hasty toilet; put on a weather-beaten hat, heavily trimmed with crape; wrapped her late husband's shepherd

plaid tightly round her; went into the hall, where her only serving maid, Janet, was already at work, and unbolted the door, drawing her veil closely over her face as the deadly east wind cut her.

From the little plateau above the Birren, upon which Cauldknowe stood, all looked bleak and bare as desolation itself. There was a chill blackness in the grey atmosphere, depressing enough to the strongest and happiest, that seemed to Mary Bayliss laden with despair and death.

For one moment she paused before the closed windows by which the Captain had stood lost in admiration of that fatally lovely autumn day more than four years ago. The refined domesticity was all gone now. The smooth, green sward where the children had played was unshorn and knotty; the broad, grey drive covered with stunted weeds; the firs and spruces black and funereal; the river tearing wildly down to the Solway with a roar that reminded the town-born woman of the roar of London at mid-day, and for an instant took her back to her childhood's home.

Only for a moment did she pause to note the desolation of everything around, and then she set off at a brisk rate towards the farm, which lay on the other side of the road.

"Everything wants doing! Give it up? No, I'd die sooner!" she said, as she hurried past the untended gardens beside the rhododendron banks. "What's the use of living without this place, which cost my precious one his life?" Then she heard, in fancy, the girls' coughs, and a horrible dread crept into her heart and chilled it. "What, if I kill my girls in the struggle? Myself?—that's nothing. I'd gladly sacrifice myself and all I have; but my girls—my girls! Oh, they make me so anxious; they are not fit for hardships! But I couldn't tear myself away from here!" and she crossed the dry, hard road to the Knowe Farm.

In the meanwhile the girls had risen, had put on each an old black serge dress, a small shawl of black and red plaid, and had gone into the kitchen to see about breakfast, Janet, the maid, being highly incompetent except for the roughest work. She had, however, made up a good fire, put on the kettle, cleaned the "girdle," and made the place look tolerably tidy.

"Sh-sh-sh-sh-o-o-o!" said Jessie, in a succession of syllables like demisemiquavers, shivering as she spoke. "Well, Alie, there's just a splendid fire, at any rate; and that's the best thing we've seen this morning."

"We'll have a good burn to begin with," said Alison, coughing. And the two girls knelt down side by side in front of the fire.

"Poor mother," said Alison; "what a morning for her to turn out upon. I do wish she wouldn't! I wonder if the wee calf's dead?"

"Of course it is," said Jessie, spreading out both hands to the blaze; "don't our calves always die? but,"—turning round suddenly—"oh, bliss! What do I see—one, two, three, four eggs on the

dresser! You don't mean to say we can have one each for breakfast! What unheard-of luxury!"

"Ah, that's grand!" said Alison. "Then we need not trouble about making porridge, and I feel very lazy this morning. I"—then she coughed again—"I wish I could get rid of this cold, it makes me so stupid."

"You would get up, you know! You made me stay in bed and be waited upon when my cold was bad. Well, this won't do! We sha'n't have breakfast ready by the time auntie comes in, if we don't make a move. It's my turn to scone this morning—you coffee—I'll scone." Jessie had an airy way of using nouns as verbs, but no doubt you can understand her.

Leaving her cousin in possession of the whole of the front of the fire, Jessie, who, now she was warm, felt well and brisk, went about the kitchen, the heels of her shoes clattering merrily over the red stone floor; collected buttermilk, flour, and soda; put the broad girdle on the fire to get hot, and set to work to make the scones for breakfast.

It was a pretty sight to see Jessie at the pastry board. The fact is, that Jessie was herself, at any time, a pretty girl to see. She was just sufficiently tall to be graceful, well grown, with a pliant young figure that looked charming anywhere. Her black serge—old, indeed, and a good deal rubbed about the sleeves—fitted her closely. It was the work of a local dressmaker, but Jessie herself had altered and altered it until now, in its old age, it was really a creditable fit. Her little red plaid shawl was pinned neatly over her shoulders. Her bright brown hair was crisply waved; by nature, to a certain extent, but in this case nature had been liberally assisted by art, for no amount of cold or sleepiness would have prevented Jessie from crimping her hair over night. Her face was a delicate oval—perhaps just the least in the world too narrow, with a straight, slender nose; her rosy lips parted, on the slightest provocation, in a smile that showed their perfect drawing, and her large, bright eyes were of a liquid beauty that would have made even plain features attractive. These eyes had a little trick difficult to define. They suddenly laughed with mirth or clouded with sadness.

Jessie was neat-handed, too, about her household work; and that gift, which is so very charming in any girl, is quite irresistible in a pretty one. To see her deftly mix up those scones, to see her roll them out and neatly cut them into shape was, thought Alison, who, like everyone else, adored Jessie, a sight at any time worth the seeing, and she turned from the fire to watch her cousin with unalloyed admiration. Isn't it charming to see girls admire one another?

"I wish I could do things as nicely as you do," sighed Alison from the fender.

"So you do, and a great deal better," returned Jessie, from the

table, stamping out, as she spoke, a scone with an inverted tumbler, the cutter proper being broken or lost; "besides which, my dear child, you are a talented authoress, and I'm a mere nobody! Look here, Alie; as you're not well, I'll make the coffee and you sit there and turn the scones."

"All right," said Alison, thankful to be able to keep near the fire. "The girdle's just splendid."

So Jessie put the scones on the hot iron girdle, and giving Alison a knife to turn them with, remarked:

"Here, talented authoress; and don't do the King Alfred business! Don't let my cakes burn while you are dreaming about 'Our Border Towers.'"

Alison laughed and actually blushed.

"No, I'll be very careful," she said; "and I wonder, I wonder—when my paper will be out. I'm thinking of another——"

"Oh, please wait till those things are cooked!" said Jessie, measuring out the coffee. "We're just through with coffee, I'm sorry to see. I do so hate having to tell auntie; I hope McQuade will be able to go and fetch up the coals to-day, or we sha'n't have enough for to-morrow, and Janet's been lavish this morning."

"I really must do something——" said Alison, with a tinge of pain quite audible in her voice.

"But they won't pay you," interrupted Jessie.

"But it leads to something; one must make a beginning. Don't you think a paper on 'The Bruce and the Royal Burgh of Annan' would be interesting?"

"Not to me; I never wish to hear his name again. I am sick and tired of him; go in for a novel, Alie."

"Ah, but you see, I haven't a light hand!" said Alison pensively, turning a puffy scone as she spoke. The want of "lightness" must have been metaphorical; that scone was turned easily enough.

"Well, I must say at present you're a trifle heavy; then I never was an antiquary, so of course I can't be expected to care for such dry-as-dust subjects as you take up; and it's difficult for me to imagine other people liking what I don't like; but——"

"But what?" asked Alison eagerly.

"The scones are burning!" cried Jessie.

"No, no, I've saved them!—but what were you going to say?"

"Why, I was going to say you've a most admirable heroine all ready for use," returned Jessie.

"Who?—Fair Helen of Kirkconnel?" asked Alison.

"Fair fiddlesticks! Me, of course, you very blind bat!" exclaimed Jessie, with ungrammatical energy, facing her cousin suddenly with her pretty figure at its tallest, and her eyes twinkling with mirth.

"You?" asked Alison, looking up at Jessie from the fender, with a curious mixture of earnest inquiry and amusement. "You—why you're not an historical personage!"

"Na-a!" said Jessie, suddenly breaking into the Birrendale accent; "but I'm an aaful pretty gaerl!" and her eyes, always bright, sparkled with fun.

"Pretty? Pretty good-looking!" laughed Alison. "Do you think three volumes devoted to a description of your mediocre charms would be any lighter reading than 'Our Border Towers?' But are you going to boil the eggs or must I? There, the scones are done to a turn!" and Alison stood the flowery cakes up on end on the table.

"Heaven and earth! What a thing it is to have no invention!" exclaimed Jessie. "(I'll do the eggs, don't you move.) But that's the curiousness of everything! I have heaps of invention, but I can't write; you can write, but where's your invention? Now I've seen myself the heroine of at least a dozen novels. You know I'm in my own mind always the centre of a little drama, and always have been as long as I can remember anything. What is the use of being—well, yes, I will say it—an exceptionally pretty girl, and an orphan—orphans are always interesting—if one can't——"

"If one can't flirt with Mac Carrutherses or the poker, or the boy Baird," put in Alison drily.

"A severe old maid at twenty, that's what you are, Alie! Come, there's auntie frozen to death, I'm sure. Let's get the breakfast in at once."

They found Mrs. Bayliss crouching over the dining-room fire, the picture of woe.

"Oh, the last little calf's dead!" she exclaimed as soon as she heard the girls' footsteps; "all our stock dies; everything's a failure! Alie, my darling child, how you coughed in the night! why did you get up?"

"I think my cold's a little better this morning, mother, and I've just had a good burn by the kitchen fire; don't worry about me. I shall be all right as soon as the wind changes."

"When it changes! That won't be till everything is utterly ruined," said the widow bitterly. "Give me some coffee. I'm half dead; the wind this morning is positively fiendish!"

"Mother!" said Alison, with a sad and tender reproof in her voice.

"Very wrong, my dear, I dare say; but I'm too wretched to be orthodox," retorted Mary sharply. She had been thinking of the fast-dwindling borrowed money as well as of the dead calf.

The girls could not talk when Mary looked so miserable. As a rule there were no letters nor papers to bring a current of fresh life from the great world; it was woefully dull.

They turned to the table and took their breakfast in silence, feeling that another dreary day was before them.

"Mother, you'll be able to spare McQuade to fetch up the coals from Kirkhope this morning?" Alison presently ventured to ask, but she put the question rather timidly.

"I can't possibly spare him to-day, and the cart's wanted on the farm," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"But we've hardly any left," said Alison, "we sha'n't be able to cook to-morrow."

"You must make them do; I can't spare him to-day. I'll send him down to-morrow as early as I can."

"We wanted him to bring several things up with him," put in Jessie. "We want coffee, and——"

"Everything, I suppose," said Mrs. Bayliss grimly. "For to-day, you must manage with what you have. There's always one resource left—*one can always go without.*"

The girls said no more; but the little spark of cheerfulness that the warmth and business of the kitchen had given them was effectually quenched. Perpetual going without, unless to the most heroic minds, is a very depressing process, especially when a bitter east wind is blowing.

"And it's quite possible to go without once too often," said Jessie, nerved to boldness by the thought of Alison's cold.

"You are in the conspiracy then, I suppose, Jessie?" said Mrs. Bayliss, with some temper.

"Conspiracy, aunt? what conspiracy can be hidden in wanting coals and coffee?"

"Read that," said Mrs. Bayliss, drawing John Harbuckle's letter out of her pocket and throwing it on the table, as if it had been a bill with a demand for immediate payment.

"From Uncle John!" exclaimed both the girls, trying to seize the letter as they spoke; "how delightful to see his handwriting again!"

The postman had given it to Mrs. Bayliss at the farm.

In the early days of the Captain's occupancy of Cauldknowe there had been a lodgekeeper and a post-bag; now the letters were left at the farm, which was close to the road, as the man could not go up the long drive.

Mrs. Bayliss had been on the point of returning home when the man had given her John Harbuckle's letter.

She had looked at the address and recognised the hand, read it, and, as if in anger, thrust it into her pocket and hurried home through a chilling fall of sleet, her husband's plaid wrapped closely round her, her battered crape hat tied down by her widow's veil. One could not see her face, but her step was agitated and uneven.

"He means to get us away if he can by any means!" she had said to herself, as she hurried along. "To take me away from my husband's grave, and from all that reminds me of him! How is it possible I could live anywhere else? But John can't know—how should he?—how I cling to every stick and stone that my poor darling's eyes once rested upon. Ah, there's that araucaria he moved just before his accident, the last tree he ever touched—that's dying, like everything else! But how can I leave it—how can I?"

She felt half choked with grief as she stopped a moment and looked at a "monkey puzzler" that had turned brown from want of nourishment, and her face grew furrowed and tears filled her eyes.

She went on again through the sleet with a foreboding in her heart that the letter she had crushed into her pocket meant change; and a resolute determination to be cut to pieces by inches sooner than yield formed rapidly in her mind.

"What a long while it is since he has written!" said Alison, to whose share the letter fell at last.

"Ah, my dear, widows and orphans are rarely overburdened with letters from anyone!" said Mrs. Bayliss acidly. "Read it aloud, Alison. You're smiling; but, I can assure you, with me it's no smiling matter."

Alison tried to look serious, but the little remark under the address had tickled her fancy; however, she began to read—

"Trinity Square,  
"Tower Hill, E.C.

("Undoubtedly the finest square in the world.)

"MY DEAREST MARY——"

("Humph—how very affectionate all at once!" interpolated the widow. "He has generally been quite content with plain 'dear.'")

"Oh, it doesn't mean that you're his 'dearest altogether,' auntie," Jessie hastened to explain, her spirits rising at the sight of the letter, "but that you're the 'dearest *Mary*' he possesses. Go on, please, Alison; I'm dying to hear that letter!"

"MY DEAREST Mary," Alison re-commenced—"I have been hoping to hear from you and the girls for some considerable time past; but, as you all seem to have forgotten my existence, I now take the liberty of reminding you that I am still alive and, to tell the truth, more than a little perplexed by a domestic problem that appears to me exceedingly difficult of solution, except upon an hypothesis that I shrink from entertaining."

("Does that mean he's going to get married at last? There's no depending on the most confirmed old bachelors!" threw in Jessie.

"This is a serious subject," said Mrs. Bayliss, knitting her brows. And then, continuing to read, Alison went on.)

"Mr. and Mrs. Robbins, the excellent people who look after me and my house, are, I have every reason to believe, a most respectable and conscientious couple. How, then, does it come about that my household expenditure now is exactly double what it used to be in our dear mother's time? I might be willing, or, rather, I could perhaps bring myself to believe that it takes more to keep one person than it does to keep two; but I fail to understand why it should cost

double as much. It is true that Mrs. Robbins is a most admirable cook, and, as one of the later Greek poets hath it—"Among the philosophers I place a cook." I admit most cheerfully Mrs. Robbins's talent in this important particular, and I am willing to allow her scope for the exercise of that talent; but still it seems to me that my daily *menu*, after all, does not warrant the exorbitant—not to put too fine a point upon it—the exorbitant demands that are perpetually being made upon my purse, especially when I take into consideration the fact that I am fond of prowling about Billingsgate and Leadenhall Markets, and of choosing the particular little bit I happen to fancy, for which I invariably pay at the time.

"The fact is, my dearest Mary, I am beginning to realise, by painful and, I must add, costly experience, that there are subjects with which the masculine mind, unless it has received a specific training, is unable to cope. I mean that, unless a man has been a purser, or something of that sort, he wants a feminine relative to look after the details of his housekeeping, or he finds himself veering towards an hypothesis that, if in the case of such a highly respectable and conscientious couple as Mr. and Mrs. Robbins, he will naturally shrink from entertaining for a moment.

"Mary, my dear girl, I have been wandering about our old home to-night, and find it full of emptiness and the memories of other times. I have a sister and two nieces (for I am sure your Jessie will let me be her Uncle John), and, as I have wandered about among my old furniture (I have some really fine examples, I assure you), in my mind's eye I have seen many very pretty pictures, of course containing feminine figures, without which there can never be a picture worth looking at, as most artists will admit. I know how fondly you cling to your present home. I do not blame you; I, too, sometimes—indeed, often—take a turn or two through Catherine Court, or the Tower Gardens, so I will not urge you to come here against your own feelings. But might it not be an advantage to the girls? The little bird in the air that carries news informs me that Alison has written a good paper on "Our Border Towers." I cannot tell you how gratified I am to find her taking such an interest in local antiquities. She would find herself here, upon Tower Hill, in the very midst of the history of England, and would be of invaluable assistance to me, as it is impossible for a business man like myself to spend hours in the Guildhall Library or the British Museum. I believe, in fact, that, were you and the girls with me, I should take a new lease of life; so, if possible, come.

"If you really can make up your mind to take me and my purse out of the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Robbins (by which a great pecuniary saving will be effected), I will come to Birrendale for a few days and put things straight for you. Have you ever thought of letting Cauldknowe furnished? That would remove the necessity for your giving up the place altogether, and as there is such good fishing

in the Birren you would have little difficulty in securing a tenant at once, if you were willing to accept a reasonable rent.

"Think this over, and let me know your decision as soon as possible. I shall look for it anxiously. In the meantime believe me, my dearest Mary, with much love to yourself and the girls,

"Your most affectionate brother,

"JOHN HARBUCKLE."

"What a dear letter! Why, who can have told him of my paper?" exclaimed Alison, as she ceased reading. And with her grey eyes beaming with pleasure, and her whole face animated, she looked almost, if not quite, a pretty girl.

Alison was not, as Jessie was, a girl everyone admired. She never struck people at once; indeed her face so varied with her thoughts and feelings that one could hardly say what she was like. When she was dull, she looked almost, if not quite, plain, when pleased, almost, if not altogether, pretty. She had good grey eyes, dark brown hair, a small, very well shaped, compact little head, and wild irregular features, that contrasted rather strangely with her ordinary sedate manner. She wore just the same kind of old black serge as Jessie, but she did not look so neat and trim in it. Her shawl was pinned awry, her abundant hair, which had not the trace of a wave in it, had been brushed back as smoothly as satin when she left her room, but had managed to get rough and out of order by this time. She looked like an odd mixture of a wild mountain girl, a blue-stockings, a Puritan maiden, and a bright-eyed, inquisitive terrier; just now, particularly like this last.

"Oh, mother, how charming to live on Tower Hill! I can imagine nothing more delightful," cried Alison; "I remember going to see grandmother there years ago. It's been in my mind ever since. I've often wondered why Sir Walter Scott never went to live on Tower Hill!"

"All the better for you, Alison," put in Jessie; "you can write his London novels for him, you know! But, oh, auntie, if you'll only say you'll take us to London, I'll jump right over the top of the house this very instant minute! That letter opens up a most lovely heavenly vision; do, do, there's a good kind auntie, do let us go!"

Jessie, clasping her hands, which were round and pretty, if rather red, and turning her bright eyes eagerly to her aunt, compelled a smile even from Mrs. Bayliss, who was, it must be confessed, seldom quite unmoved by Jessie's charms.

"You're going to let us go, aren't you?" continued Jessie, strengthening the effect of her clasped hands and brilliant eyes, as she noticed that she had already made some impression upon her aunt.

But there, I am afraid she just overshot the mark, and aroused Mrs. Bayliss to the fact that Jessie was actually attacking her known objections to leaving Cauldknowe.

Mrs. Bayliss, acting on the defensive, crushed back the smile that, unbidden, had slightly curved her lips, and drew her mouth down at the corners again.

"What, leave your poor uncle in his grave, Jessie?" she asked reproachfully.

"Mother, dear, Heaven is as near to London as it is to Birrendale," said Alison gently.

"Yes, yes, but still"—and her voice gave way suddenly—"you can't, you can't know, children, you can't possibly know!" And, not liking to cry before the girls, she went off to her own cold room and locked herself in with her grief.

The girls looked after her in silence and dismay as she hurried from them. They were used to these outbursts of tears, but each one made them feel sadder than the last had done.

"Poor mammie!" sighed Alison; "ah me!" Then there was another silence, during which Alison put the breakfast things together on a tray.

"I wonder sometimes," she said presently, under her voice, as she took off the crumbs with the scoop, "I wonder sometimes if any other man was ever so deeply mourned as my father is."

"Mine!" said Jessie, in the same undertone. "My father's death killed my mother. I shall never forget how she looked all the time, from the day she heard of that wreck until she died. Although I was quite a child then, I shall always see her face as it was during those dreadful months. Poor darling mother, how sweet she was! How good! too good for this rough world! Oh, Alison, do you know she came to me last night, and smiled! I was so thankful! It made me feel so strangely happy! She smiled again, think of that! And so gently and happily! Perhaps it means something! Can it be an omen of good? There is to be an end to all this wretchedness perhaps? Oh, how I hope so! Stop a minute, Alie, don't ring the bell just yet"—and she drew up her chair to the fire and put on another log. "What does that mean about Catherine Court and the Tower Gardens in Uncle John's letter? I don't quite see what that allusion refers to, and yet—and yet"—she paused as if trying to catch some fleeting memory—"the names recall something to my mind. Ah"—suddenly brightening—"I remember! Mother used to speak of them a long while ago, when I was very little, but not much afterwards."

"Don't you know she used to live there when she was a girl?" said Alison, who had taken up her favourite position on the corner of the low stone wall that bounded the tiled hearth. Her cold was much better, but she was a long way from well.

"I knew she had stayed there, but I didn't know it was her home," said Jessie.

"Oh, yes, it was. She and my mother lived quite near each other, and used to play in the Tower Gardens when they

were children. Your mother was younger than mine, and everybody's pet."

"Ah, like her daughter!" said Jessie, with a faint attempt at mirthfulness.

"Everybody's pet," continued Alison; "but I fancy, although I've never been told very distinctly, that she was—that is, that Uncle John, who of course was young once the same as other people, liked her very much indeed; only, you see, my father happening to have a brother, almost as fascinating——"

"Not almost—quite," said Jessie.

"Well, we know what we mean, don't we? I can't tell you exactly how it was. Mother isn't proud of being a citizeness; she never cares to talk about it. It's a pity, because the City of London would interest me so very much more than any other place in the world. But now, about this letter! It will have to be answered. Dear Uncle John! when an ingenuous man attempts to be wily, how transparent he is! Of course he knows how wretched we are here, and he wants to help us. You'd like to go to London, I suppose?"

Jessie clasped her head as if to keep her crinkly hair from flying off with amazement that Alison should have asked such a question.

"Go! Why, I'd crawl there on my knees if I couldn't get there any other way! London! the idea of living there is simple bliss after our late experience! The idea of seeing people—of being in a place where there are people, is so delicious!"

"So I think," said Alison. "And Tower Hill—the City—what a field for research!"

"What a field for living instead of existing!" said Jessie. "But what about auntie? How can we make her listen to reason if, as soon as we allude to the subject, she goes and shuts herself up and cries?"

"Jessie," said Alison gravely, "she must go."

"You mean, if she doesn't go, she will, one day, be turned out," said Jessie, with a sort of dryness that with her indicated mental pain.

Alison slowly bent her head in assent.

"Now we've this opening before us, we mustn't let that happen, must we?" she said, after a momentary pause. "No, it would be cruel to let it happen; and we've no right to ask Uncle John to throw away any more of his money. Besides, I'm sure he wouldn't do it; why should he? No, we must go. If mother refuses Uncle John's offer, I shall write on my own responsibility and tell him exactly how things stand. We're now just living—no, I won't call it living—we're just barely existing on as little of the money mother borrowed as will keep our bodies and souls together, and the rest goes to that devouring farm. I dread tearing mother away, but it will have to be done, Jessie. And when the wrench is over it will be better for her, and—she's coming; let us run off and get our room done, before we

discuss it with her—come at once; she won't care to see us just now."

And ringing the bell for Janet to clear away, the two girls went off to make their own beds, and dust their own room, while Mrs. Bayliss went to the kitchen, and interviewed one Edward Irving, a labourer from the farm, who had been sent up to the house for a good many things he was not at all likely to get.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CAPTAIN'S LAST GREAT WORK.

THE girls having arranged their own room, went to Mrs. Bayliss's, where Alison was much moved on observing that the quilt, by the side of which her mother had evidently been kneeling, was still impressed with the form of her head and wet with her tears.

Alison made no remark about it to Jessie, but wondered sorrowfully to what decision her mother had come. Was she still clinging with heroic folly to her ruin, or had she come to the still more heroic determination of yielding for the sake of the girls?

Many little things about the room had been recently moved. She must again have been inspecting her husband's relics and asking, as it were, counsel of his watch and of the covers of his favourite books.

There was no upstairs to this Birrendale house. The bedrooms ran out from a corridor leading to the entrance hall, on the opposite side of which were the dining-room and the drawing-room; this last-named being that fatal apartment by whose open windows the poor Captain had stood drinking tea out of the cups with the heather pattern, and wondering at the loveliness of the wooded banks of the rapid stream as seen through a cunningly contrived vista.

That room had been shut up now for many months. The few visitors that called were received in what had become the one and only living-room. Great, therefore, was the surprise when the two girls, coming from their household work, noticed that the drawing-room door stood ajar, and that a stream of cold grey light was issuing therefrom, falling upon a trophy in the hall that the Captain had made of the weapons he had collected during his foreign service.

In that house the memorials of the late Captain were everywhere.

"Can anyone have called?" whispered Alison; "you're tidy, go into the drawing-room and find out."

Alison, poor girl, was perpetually haunted by a feeling that she was terribly untidy. Certainly she was not so trim and neat as Jessie, but very untidy she rarely looked to other eyes than her own.

"I don't think there can be anyone so early," said Jessie. "I'll just peep in," and she cautiously pushed open the door.

The shutters were thrown wide open, but Mrs. Bayliss was the

only person in the room, and she was standing lost in mournful thought before an easel, gazing at her husband's latest work of art.

Jessie stepped back into the hall.

"There's no one there except auntie. She's looking at poor uncle's pictures," she said, under her voice. "Let's go into the dining-room; I'm frozen."

"No, no, let's go to her! she's been alone long enough," returned Alison, in a hurried and anxious whisper. "Come, dear!"

And she quietly crossed the room and stood with Jessie behind her mother, and, without a word from any of them, looked at her father's last work; the widow only indicating that she was aware of their presence by a slight movement of her eyes from the portrait on the easel to a small pencil sketch of a young man's head that she held in her hand.

It was a pathetic little group, the widow in her shabby crape, the girls in the worn serges, with the one touch of brightness in their little shawls. They all stood so still and sad; so sorrowful with loss, so anxious for the future. Pathetic—yes—but dare I describe the relic before whose shrine they stood?

It was that unfinished portrait of his wife of which Captain Bayliss had once spoken to his friend Major Johnstone, and which he had declared everyone had recognised as "a striking likeness."

"A striking likeness!" Heaven forbid that any woman anywhere in all the world should be like that unspeakable thing! The mouth!—one's blood curdles to think of that mouth; of those livid eyes, so ghoul-like in expression.

It was appallingly awful and infra-human, yet, horror of horrors! it bore a hideous resemblance to the broken-hearted woman standing before it. You could tell it was meant for her.

It was colossal in size. Had there been a body of like proportion it must have risen—ugh! I shudder as I imagine that hideous form rising—growing as the poodle does in *Faust*—until it reached the ceiling, and then pushing—for there was force enough in the huge muscles of that unclothed neck to push through anything—through the roof and impiously facing the grey sky overhead. Oh, that head and bust! It was a thing to haunt you for ever if you once saw it!

And here, of course, I am supposing that you had eyes to see it. Mary Bayliss had not, or I doubt whether even she would have been devoted enough to her husband's memory to have exhibited such a horror in her own drawing-room as "a portrait of herself."

She was, however, dimly aware that it was not lovely, but she excused that on the ground of its unfinished condition. What she did know, what was burnt into her heart, was the fact that it had been worked at in those happy, happy days, that sweet second honeymoon, when she and her Captain had first come to Birrendale. Alas for those days! where were they now? Gone with the frail meadow-sweet the girls had picked down by the still salmon pool on those

delicious autumn evenings, when he and she used to read and talk together! Gone, all gone; but this—this work of his, this evidence of his love for her—this remained! Her portrait was his last attempt at art.

After the three had stood before this precious relic for a few seconds, which seemed quite a long while to the girls, Mary went to the window and carefully examined the sketch she had been holding in her hand.

"Jessie, come here, darling," she presently said, in a gentle, tearful voice.

Jessie went to her, feeling very much as if she were in a mortuary chapel listening to the burial service.

"Yes, auntie dear?" she asked, under her voice.

"You have not seen this before, love?"

It was a slight pencil drawing of a young man with a large frontal development and very small features. It must have been done many years ago—the paper was quite discoloured. Under the portrait was written, in Mary's hand—

"Poor Arthur—my dearest James's first portrait."

"Your father, Jessie."

"Yes," said Jessie; but her tone implied, "I don't recognise it in the least."

"Taken many years before you can remember, dear. Your poor mother prized it fondly. I am going to give it to you, darling. Pray be very, very careful of it! Here, Jessie."

"Thank you, auntie," said Jessie, kissing Mary with a clinging action, to which the widow responded by folding the girl in her arms.

"My darling, almost with his last breath, said, 'You'll always be kind to poor Arthur's Jessie?' she sighed. "I hope I'm good to you, my dear?"—stroking the girl's hair.

"Oh, auntie! How can you ask?" murmured Jessie.

"Alison, love, I've been selfish; my grief has made me forget you," said Mary, turning to her daughter. "No, dear—not forget you. But I've thought, perhaps too much, that you were only mine; I ought, perhaps, to have remembered, to have thought more, that you were his—a sacred trust left by him."

"Dearest mother," said Alison, the tears rushing into her own eyes, "we know—we know a little how hard it must be for you to leave this place. But you will let us go to London, won't you?"

"Don't press me, child! I'll write. I'll write to Uncle John and ask him to come here; I'll try to make him understand, if I can. But how can he know what I feel? What sympathy can there be between us? How am I to live away from here? But I'll try to write—I'll try to make him understand."

Without another word she turned abruptly and went into the dining-room, took several sheets of Alison's scribbling paper, and began to write.

Mrs. Bayliss, sitting writing at the table, looked singularly unattractive. She had, of course, taken off her hat, but she had not yet given herself the trouble to put on the cap and collar and wristbands she generally wore. What was the use? She would have probably to go out about the ground, "the policy," as they called it there, or over to the farm many times yet before evening.

Mary Harbuckle at four years of age had been a miracle of fair childish beauty; at eighteen rather a pretty girl. Mary Bayliss at thirty had been a tolerably good-looking young matron (she had, in fact, been greatly admired both at "Gib." and at Malta when she and the Captain had been quartered at those places); but now, at forty-six, her hair, without gaining the dignity of gray, had lost its colour, and was very thin. What little remained of it was so tightly drawn off her face, and brushed so closely to her head, that it was almost as if she were bald; which effect was heightened by her colourless eyebrows and lashes, and the general hard, shiny pinkiness of her whole complexion that constant exposure to rough weather, as well as years, had sadly scarred and dried.

As she wrote, the corners of her mouth, the most expressive part of her face, told of desolating grief. Her grief was now her one luxury of life; she hugged it to her, almost as if it had worn some visible form, and with a dogged resolution that nothing should separate her from it. James Bayliss's widow was a very different woman from James Bayliss's wife. There may, indeed, always have been the same admixture in her character; but what had once been weak was strong now, and what had in other days been most prominent had receded—she was an entirely changed woman.

Not many minutes did she sit there. The man, McQuade, soon came over to sow the peas which should have been in the ground some weeks ago. Mary went out with him and stood in the bitter wind, wrangling about the best place for them for some time; then came back, tore up the elaborate epistle to her brother she had already composed, and began the first draft of another.

When her mother left the drawing-room, Alison went up to the window to close the shutter.

Jessie followed her. For a moment they both stood looking out at the cold gray day.

"Alison, you must take me away, dear!" said Jessie very miserably, laying her head on Alison's shoulder as she spoke. "You will take me away, won't you?" she continued, dropping into a half-childish whine. "Alic, you won't let me be thrown to the wolves?"

"I can't bear to have to fight her!" returned Alison.

"We can't stay here and be killed! and all for nothing too," exclaimed Jessie.

"Never mind, darling, we'll go! We *will* go. I will, I must take you away. I won't have you killed."

"Because I shall be very soon," said Jessie, with a pathetic simplicity like a sick child's.

"Come, don't let us freeze in here any longer. There's the dinner to see after," said Alison bravely, but stooping to kiss Jessie's hair as she spoke.

"Dinner! I don't believe there is any!" said Jessie, as if much inclined to cry.

"At any rate, we'd better arrange what there is," said Alison. "Let's be off, dear."

So they went into the kitchen, where they were at least warm and busy for an hour or so.

Presently they went to their own room to "sort themselves," as Janet would put it; "tidy themselves" an English Sarah or Mary Ann might use as an equivalent.

But scarcely had they entered the room when Jessie gave a sudden start.

"Hark!" she exclaimed, "what's that!" and she stood still as stone, her bright eyes eager with listening, her sweet lips parted and fixed.

"It's only McQuade with the cart," said Alison calmly.

Jessie darted to the window.

"Oh!" she cried with a thrill of the wildest joy in her voice, and a sudden fervent clasp of her hands, "oh! it is—it is—it's Mac—it's Mac Carruthers!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MAC CARRUTHERS.

ART is irrepressible.

The Moorish followers of the Prophet, forbidden to adorn the walls of their mosques with figures, found room for the exercise of their artistic talents in elaborate arabesques: the lower orders of the Birrendale people display *their* artistic ingenuity on their door-steps.

Janet, having "redded" the step in front of Mrs. Bayliss's house, had carefully ornamented it with a device of many wavy lines, sharp ziz-zags, and irregular dots, boldly done in whiting.

It was the one and only effort in pictorial art of which she was capable, and ought therefore to be treated with consideration; such efforts may be seen in any street on any Saturday afternoon in any Birrendale village.

When Mrs. Bayliss had cared how her house looked, she had forbidden this display of talent; now she was too indifferent to notice it.

On this red step, with its grotesque ornamentation, Mr. Malcolm

Carruthers, having rung the bell, the brass knob of which Janet had lately been rubbing up with the tenderest care, the door-step and bell-knob being almost the only things belonging to the house in which she took any deep interest ; on this red step, I repeat, Mr. Malcolm Carruthers, having rung the bell, stood in the bitter east wind awaiting the opening of the door.

Malcolm Carruthers was a young man of twenty-four or thereabouts, who might be called either a Scotch-Englishman or an Anglo-Indian Scotchman ; his father and himself having been born in India, their paternal relatives being Scotch, their maternal English.

Carruthers is a distinctly Border name, as common in Birrendale as Robinson in London. It has belonged to the locality from time immemorial and is said to be of Ancient British origin ; indeed, as Mac himself often said : " My uncle traces back the family miles and miles beyond the Deluge ; " so no doubt Mac Carruthers owned an ancestry as much given to getting hanged at bonnie Carlisle as any young man who ever lived in the now most respectable and decorous old " reaving land."

Mac's uncle, with whom he was then living, was a distinguished man in his county, no other, in fact, than Alexander Carruthers, Esq., the Laird of Muirhead, a considerable property a few miles from Cauldknowe ; but Mac himself was by no means a remarkable person, except in the eyes of Jessie Carruthers and in those of his cousin, Alec, the only son of the Laird, with whom Mac was as grand a hero as any in a Border ballad. You might have passed Mac in the street without notice.

He was, however, a strongly built if not very finely finished young fellow. There was also a certain good-humoured kindness about his blunt features, and (as in the case of Jessie) on the slightest provocation, a merry, merry twinkle in his rather small eyes.

As he stood on that red-ochred door-step, his expression was at that moment more suggestive of having faced a biting east wind than anything else ; his natural beauty, never much at any time, was a good deal impaired just now by the redness of all the prominences of his face. He was buttoned up to the chin in a thick but very short riding-jacket, and he held in his hand his hunting crop and his horse's bridle. His face was not towards the door, but towards his horse, to which he from time to time addressed observations not always of a complimentary nature ; and this, not because he was angry with the creature, but because he was feeling excessively nervous.

It was seldom that Mac felt nervous, but there are circumstances that upset the strongest of us.

The fact was, that Mac had not seen Jessie Bayliss for nearly five months.

Would Mac Carruthers then have been prepared to state solemnly that he was desperately in love with Jessie ?

I am not sure he would. Certain it is that as he waited there—and they kept him it seemed a most unmerciful time—he felt over-excited, but not to the extent of losing his self-possession.

Now Jessie, as soon as she was sure that it was indeed Mac who was trotting up the avenue on his cousin's bay, delighted, over-joyed, as she was, was still capable of grappling with the urgent practical difficulty that arose at once.

"Alie! who's to open the door? Janet's just one coal by this time. You must go! Make haste—he's ringing!"

"No, no," said Alison, "you're tidier than I am."

"I will *not*," said Jessie, stamping her foot. "Go at once! Will you go? Oh, make haste!"

"But I'm not fit to be seen. Look at my sleeves," said Alison.

"Yes, yes, you are—besides——"

"Besides, no one ever sees me, so it doesn't matter," said Alison, as if finishing Jessie's sentence; and off she hurried, calling back as she went—

"Alas! Alas! for the boy Baird and the hundred and fifty others."

"Don't let him go! Mind you don't let him go! I'll be down directly," Jessie called after her, tearing open a drawer, and beginning a frantic search for her neatest collar and cuffs.

"Mrs. Bayliss is at——" Mac Carruthers asked, turning round sharply as the door was opened; then recognising Alison, he stopped short, made a hurried grasp at his cap, succeeded in raising it a long way from his head, and went on.

"How do you do, Miss Bayliss! I'm afraid I've come over at an unconscionably early hour."

"Not at all," said Alison, with a certain easy dignity, and apparently no more disconcerted than if she had met him in the drawing-room in a proper way.

"Not at all. Won't you come in? Mother is at home, she will be very pleased to see you. I think McQuade is somewhere about; he'll take your horse. I'll send Janet to look for him."

"Thanks, but I mustn't stay five minutes. They won't wait lunch for me; but they'll expect me to be in to time. It was about those two rods I wanted to see Mrs. Bayliss. She hasn't let them, I hope?"

"I don't quite know," said Alison. "The Johnstones will be needing them, I think. But come in, that is, wait one moment till I fetch Janet. Oh, here's McQuade from the farm! I'll tell mother you're here, if you won't mind waiting for one instant," she turned quickly and went into the dining-room, where she found her mother still in the agonies of composition.

Mrs. Bayliss raised a flushed face to Alison.

"It's Mac Carruthers, mother," said Alison, in a half whisper, going up to Mrs. Bayliss's chair. "He's come to know about the fishing."

"Dear, dear, what a nuisance. Open the drawing-room shutters and let him go in there."

"Oh, let him come here, mother," pleaded Alison, "never mind the papers."

"Well, bring him in, then. I suppose nothing matters now," said Mary ungraciously.

"It is all quite nice," said Alison.

"But mind, I won't have him asked to lunch," said Mrs. Bayliss, gathering her papers together.

"No, no, of course not," said Alison soothingly, half amused at the idea that such a meal as lunch still existed at their house.

"There, that's all right, mother," and she went to the door again.

"Now, Mr. Carruthers," said she, "come in. I'm afraid you must have had a most uncomfortable ride."

"Awful! I got caught in a driving hail-storm that nearly cut my face to bits; you see I haven't much left. Lovely place this to be out of. How do you do, Mrs. Bayliss?" and he shook the widow's hand with a good deal of grasp.

Mrs. Bayliss shrugged her shoulders.

"What was that I heard you say as you came in?" she asked with a faint smile.

"I was saying—let me see—what was I saying? Oh, I know. I was saying"—and he took a chair and crushed his cap between his hands into as small a compass as possible—"I was saying this is a good place to be out of; and when you've seen another country or two, you find it is."

"And how is your cousin? You enjoyed yourself at Nice, I conclude from your remark," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"I conclude we did, Mrs. Bayliss; and I've grown quite American, you see. Poor old Alec was right enough out there under the palms, and with plenty to amuse him; but they would come back, they heard of that little spell of fine weather you had last month, and it was too much for them. Alec began to say he wearied to get home, and the others were wanted at Muirhead, so we came back. His cough's frightful again, poor old fellow. But it's about the fishing especially, I've ridden over. Now you haven't let it yet, I hope? I can't support life here without the fishing. Ours isn't more than enough for my uncle and his friends. I like to feel independent."

"The fishing," exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss thoughtfully, as if another problem had suddenly cropped up for solution. "Well, I promised to give Major Johnstone the refusal," and she paused.

"The Johnstones won't be back until the end of July—wise people. That's the beauty of having a big house here—one's never in it. I'd be quite willing to—to—"

Enter Jessie, in spotless cuffs and collar, freshly fluffed-up hair, and a few primroses fastened beside her brooch; so pretty, so trim, in such

dainty order, that no masculine observer would note the radical shabbiness of her dress.

Up sprang Mr. Malcolm Carruthers to welcome this vision of beauty. He was not at all bashful by nature, but the frank pleasure in Jessie's bright hazel eyes was almost too much for him.

She held out her hand as if he and she had been friends for many years.

"And so you've come back already?" she said, with the slightest imaginable touch of the local accent. A little inflection of the voice, that was one of Jessie's many weapons of war—not that she knew it. Mac Carruthers felt himself recompensed for all the hail-stones.

"Yes, they dragged us away, and Alec's all the worse for it. As for me, it doesn't much matter; I'm as strong as an alligator."

"Have they told you we're just flitting South?" asked Jessie, taking up her knitting with admirable composure.

"How horrible!" exclaimed the young man fervently. "How intensely disgusting!"

"I thought you said this was such a lovely place to be out of?" put in Alison, with a certain *naïveté*. "Why then should it be horrible for us to leave it?"

"Oh, it's a jolly place enough in summer and autumn!" said he, "and the severest part of the spring is over now. Think what it will be in another month or so."

"Jessie's remark was rather premature; we are *only thinking* of going South," said Mrs. Bayliss. "It was that that made me hesitate about the fishing. Of course, if we let this place, the tenant will most probably take the fishing too."

"But *pro tem*? Mayn't I have it *pro tem*? Not if I promise to give it up at a minute's notice?" pleaded Mac eagerly.

"With such a proviso I don't know why you should not," said Mrs. Bayliss grandly. "But you see," she went on with a slight unbending, "you see, our plans are at present so—so very indefinite."

"Not at all," put in Jessie audaciously, "we are going to London at once. Where we hope to——"

"That is by no means certain," said Mrs. Bayliss, cutting Jessie short.

"So much the better for me and my rod!" said Mac, rising to depart. "Thank you very much."

"Remember me to Mrs. Carruthers," said Mrs. Bayliss, shaking hands, after which Mac wished her good morning and went out of the room.

The girls followed him into the hall, considerably closing the door behind them, that Mrs. Bayliss might not feel a draught.

"You don't mean that you really are flitting?" Mac asked seriously of Jessie, as they stood beside the late Captain's Indian trophies. (Alison had kindly retired to the icy drawing-room.)

"But we just are," said Alison's cousin,

"No, but I say! It won't do, you know!" protested Mac.

"Won't do! I was fit to jump over the house when it was settled," said Jessie.

"Then it is settled?" he asked, under his voice.

"Aye, it is," said Jessie.

"Then I must have a rod in the Birren every day, spate or no spate! The Birren's running *café au lait* at present; never mind, it's clearing; it will be all right to-morrow, see if it isn't! I shall be glad of a little quiet fishing just to give me time to think of——" he broke off suddenly. "Oh, the American girls at Nice," and he heaved a great sigh. "And the Viennese girls!" and he heaved another. "Did you ever see a Viennese girl?"

"Never a one," said Jessie; "how should I?—we go nowhere. Are they so wonderful?"

"Well, they are——" and Mac held up his hand and shook his head up and down, as if absolutely unable to find an English word adequate to express the charms of the fair daughters of the Austrian capital. "They're dreams! Visions! And they flirt—ah! *how* they flirt! And, what's more, they make you flirt with them! St. Anthony himself couldn't have resisted their wiles. They're just perfection!"

"Ah, the dear things! How nice! How dull you'll be fishing down by the brae-foot alone without them!" said Jessie with mock gravity; at which Mac and she simultaneously burst out laughing, as if it were the drollest thing in the world. And they laughed and laughed, and couldn't stop their laughter. "Oh," said Jessie, when she could speak distinctly, "what a fine thing it is to have a really good laugh again! It's months and months since I've laughed."

"Surely the brilliant wit of the boy Baird must have made you merry often enough!" said Mac.

"You sha'n't make fun of him! He's been our only friend, and he didn't go away like some others we could mention."

"Won't you say you're glad to see me again?" asked Mac, turning his head a little aside, and looking down at Jessie with as much sentiment as he could command.

"No, that I'll not!" returned Jessie stoutly, her words positively dancing with delight.

"Then say you've been dull without me?"

"No, that I'll not!" repeated Jessie, with increasing fervour.

"Oh, those Viennese girls!" exclaimed Mac, turning his eyes up to the ceiling. "Why was I torn away from them by ruthless duty?" And he heaved another sigh that again set Jessie laughing such a pretty musical laugh that Mac was encouraged, laughing also, to say, touching one of the little flowers at her brooch: "Look here; I'm going to have those to punish you for not being glad to see me again!"

But Jessie was too quick for him, and shielded them with her hand, which gave rise to a little skirmish, and more laughter, and

more talk, very foolish talk, far too foolish to put on paper, but very, very delightful to both of those silly young people.

"And when did you come home?" presently asked Jessie.

"We got home yesterday evening, too late for me to dare to come over," said Mac.

"Then this is your first visit to anyone?" asked Jessie.

"Aye!" returned Mac.

"You're quite sure?" she asked, with half a glance up at him.

"Sure! How can I be sure of anything when all my wits have gone out wool-gathering? I can't stand so many blows! I thought—well, never mind; the idea of your leaving has quite crushed me. Why can't you stay? The weather will be splendid in a week or so—and I did think—but no matter."

"We can't stay, because we haven't any money," said Jessie simply.

"What could be more beautiful? Neither have I," returned Mac lightly. "Say you won't go—at least, not just yet."

Something in Mac's tone, as he spoke the last sentence, made Jessie's colour rise and her eyelids veil her beautiful eyes.

She drew back a little from him.

"Won't you be late for lunch?" she asked, very much under her voice, still retreating.

They were not engaged, nor, indeed, had there ever been anything more than this frivolous sort of play.

"You are glad to see me just one wee bit though, aren't you?" asked Mac, with a touch of earnestness.

"I don't know," said Jessie, and paused. "I wish you'd go now," she went on, hurriedly. "Why don't you go? Will you go?"

Then there was more foolish and delightful talk. But at last Mac opened the door; McQuade brought up the horse, and a few minutes later Mac disappeared down that path by the braeside, up which the poor Captain and Major Johnstone had sauntered on that autumn afternoon when the fatal cups of tea had been passed to them through the open drawing-room windows.

Oh, light of heart was Mac Carruthers as he faced the piercing wind once more!

As for Jessie, she, after gazing out of the window for a few minutes, sought out Alison, and to her she said, turning right away from her and looking at the opposite wall:

"Alie, must we really go to London? Are we obliged to go? It's very nice here in the fine weather. Isn't it possible to stay, somehow or other? I don't feel as if I wanted to leave Birrendale just yet. I'm like auntie, I don't think I *can* go. I wish that letter had not come!"

"And only just now you were imploring me to take you away!" exclaimed Alison.

"Yes; but how was I to know?" asked Jessie in return.

*(To be continued.)*

## "IN THE BEGINNING."

### I.

**G**EOLOGISTS divide the ages of the world before the creation of man into four periods or epochs, which, for convenience, they denominate Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Quaternary Epochs.

Preceding the Primary period was a time of chaos, so to speak, "when the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." During this time there were sublime and mysterious convulsions of nature. The earth may even, at the beginning, according to some philosophers, have been an immense gaseous mass existing at an excessively high temperature. As it slowly cooled, it assumed its flattened spheroidal shape, and beds of concrete substances were formed, the heaviest necessarily sinking lowest, only, perhaps, to be forced to the surface again by the boiling and bubbling up of the burning mass within. We see even yet slight exhibitions of this phenomenon in the earthquakes and volcanoes which shake the solid ground, and send up fire and sulphurous vapour from the depths of the earth.

Says a writer, describing this early period in the world's existence : "The first terrestrial crust formed would be incapable of resisting the waves of the ocean of internal fire, which would be depressed and raised up at its daily flux and reflux in obedience to the attraction of the sun and moon. Who can trace, even in imagination, the fearful rendings, the gigantic inundations, which would result from these movements? Who would dare to paint the sublime horrors of these first mysterious convulsions of the globe? Amid torrents of molten matter, mixed with gases, upheaving and piercing the scarcely consolidated crust, large crevices would be opened, and through these gaping cracks waves of liquid granite would be ejected, and there left to cool and consolidate on the surface. In this manner would the first mountains be formed. In this way, also, might some metallic veins be ejected through the smaller openings, true injections of the irruptive matter produced from the interior of the globe, traversing the primitive rocks and constituting the precious depository of metals, such as copper, zinc, antimony and lead."

When the active warring of the elements had ceased ; when land and water had each been assigned their especial localities ; when the atmosphere which enveloped the globe had become sufficiently solidified to transmit the rays of the sun, and thus God's mandate, "Let there be light!" was obeyed ; then for the first time was organic life possible. Now began the Primary period of which geologists

speak. It must ever remain a mystery how that first life originated, and theologians and scientists will probably find it a fruitful theme for dispute to the end of time. Again, at this day it seems impossible to decide whether animal or vegetable life had the precedence in the order of creation. Darwinians will maintain that vegetation, as representing the lowest order of life, came first, in accordance with their theory of development, which demands a beginning at the very lowest and crudest forms, but a single remove from inanimate objects. We can only judge from the evidences of geology that the two orders of existence—the vegetable and the animal—were nearly or quite coeval, with perhaps a slight balance of testimony in favour of the Darwinians.

The Primary epoch is divided by geologists into a number of periods. The first of these, the Cambrian period, is so named from the rocks in which occur the traces of the earliest life. These rocks are found specially in England, Wales, and Ireland. They have markings of a peculiar character, and abound in fossils. They are filled with worm tracks or burrows, and the fossils represent the earliest inhabitants of the ocean.

Next in order comes the Silurian period, indicated by a system of rocks overspreading the whole earth. The name Silurian is given from a large tract of country in England and Wales formed of this system of rocks, and formerly peopled by the Silures, a Celtic race.

The characteristics of the Silurian period are supposed to have been shallow seas, with barren reefs and rocks rising out of the water. The fossil remains of this period indicate various mollusca and articulated animals, and a class of flowerless plants, called *Algae*, which bore a strong resemblance in their form to sea-weed of the present time. The *Algae* were succeeded by the *Lycopodeaceae*, displaying a little higher order of development. The seeds of these plants are found sparingly in the Silurian rocks.

The animal life of the Silurian seas was predacious in its habits. Their organisms were in some respects rudimentary. The *Trilobites*, a remarkable group of *Crustacea*, possessed simple and reticulated compound eyes. Of these *Crustacea* there were nearly two thousand species. Nearly ten thousand species of fossil remains of the Silurian period have been discovered and noted, while probably ten times as much still lies buried in the rocks. The *Crustaceans* predominated at that day; but they differed much in appearance from the lobsters and crabs which represent that order in our day. The *Trilobites* became extinct at the end of the Carboniferous epoch. The head was protected by an oval buckler, and the covering of the body was jointed or articulated, sometimes in rings and sometimes in plates.

The Silurian system of rocks is the one the most disturbed, showing that immediately following this age the crust of the globe was subject to numerous violent changes and upheavals. Beds of rock originally horizontal were turned up, contorted, folded over, and sometimes

even set vertical. The bottom of the sea was frequently upheaved and left a mountain side or top.

The Old Red Sandstone or Devonian period is the name given to the third division of the Primary epoch. The rocks of the Devonian period exhibit fossils and plants of a more complex order than those of the subsequent period. Vertebrated animals, represented by numerous fishes, succeeded the *Zoophytes*, *Trilobites*, and *Molluscs*. The ocean still vastly predominated over the land, though here and there were islands covered with plants which resembled mosses. There were yet no trees, though certain plants rose to a considerable height on tall and slender stems. *Cryptogams*, to which the mushrooms of the present day bear the nearest resemblance, were plentiful.

The fishes of the Old Red Sandstone period were more or less encased in armour, and some of them were beautiful and curious in form.

The Carboniferous period succeeds the Devonian, and this period is subdivided into the coal-measures, and the carboniferous limestone. The first gave rise to great deposits of coal, and the second to marine deposits frequently underlying the coal-fields.

The limestone mountains which form the base of the whole system, attain to a great thickness, and are of marine origin, being composed of the remains and filled with the fossils of *Zoophytes*, *Radiata*, *Cephalopoda* and fishes. The thickness of this limestone formation is in some places 2,500 feet, and attests to an almost inconceivable amount of animal life during the previous period.

Now, for the first time, do we find indications of forests. The vegetation of this period must have been profuse and luxuriant. The *Sigillaria* and *Stigmara*, and other fern-like plants, grew to the altitude of trees, and were left undisturbed; for there yet seemed no terrestrial life. The Carboniferous period was one of vast duration, as it has been estimated that it would require 122,400 years to produce only sixty feet of coal. Coal is composed of the mineralised remains of vegetation which flourished in some remote age of the world—the age which we are describing as the Carboniferous period. The duration of this period and the vast amount of vegetation which sprung into life and then fell into decay can be perceived by the apparently inexhaustible supplies of coal which exist in all portions of the world. These coal deposits are buried underneath immense rocks and thick layers of earth, indicating violent convulsions of nature and a great lapse of time since their deposit.

When we regard this lapse of time, it makes the present and the narrow period of the world's history covered by record and tradition, sink into contemptible nothingness. It is impossible to compute the time that has elapsed since these coal deposits were made. It is still less possible to measure the time of the growth and decay of vegetation which caused them. Then, stretching far back of that age are two succeeding periods, each of undoubted immense duration; and

we are not yet at the beginning of creation. Beyond that we have no data upon which to build up our theories. All is vague surmise; except that we begin to comprehend that time, even as we trace it backward, may be eternal.

Two characteristics of the Carboniferous period were excessive heat and excessive humidity of the atmosphere; and the fossils of vegetation remaining to us from that period prove that plants then attained enormous dimensions. The temperature of the whole globe seems to have been nearly the same in all latitudes. The same remains of plant life are found from Spitzbergen to Central Africa.

The *Lycopodiaceæ* of to-day are humble plants scarcely a yard in height; those of the ancient world measured eighty or ninety feet in height, and there were forests of *Lepidodendrons*. With all this wealth of verdure, there were yet seen no flowers, and the species of plants were few, all belonging to the lower types of vegetation. There were no terrestrial animals as yet. There may have been a few winged insects; and a few land-snails might have found their homes on the damp earth. Some of the forms of vegetable life then existing are now comparatively extinct; others still exist in greatly diminished proportions.

During the Carboniferous period, coral began to be formed in the sea, and the waters were alive with strange fish, though the *Crustaceans* seem rare in the Carboniferous limestone strata. During this period vegetation seemed to reach its maximum, while the animal kingdom was poorly represented.

Picture yourself walking through a marshy forest during the Carboniferous period. On the right are seen the naked trunks of a *Lepidodendron* and a *Sigillaria*, an arborescent fern rising between the two trunks. At the foot of these great trees an herbaceous fern and a *Stigmara* appear, whose long ramification of roots, provided with reproductive spores, extend to the water. On the left is the naked trunk of another *Sigillaria*, a tree whose foliage is altogether unknown, a *Sphenophyllum* and a *Conifer*. It is difficult to describe with precision the species of this last family, the impressions of which are, nevertheless, very abundant in the coal measures. In front of this group we see two trunks broken and overthrown. These are a *Lepidodendron* and a *Sigillaria*, mingling with a heap of vegetable debris in course of decomposition. Some herbaceous ferns and buds of *Calamites* rise out of the waters of the marsh. A few fishes belonging to the period swim on the surface of the water, and the aquatic reptile *Archegosaurus* shows its long and pointed head. A *Stigmara* extends its roots into the water, and the pretty *Asterophyllites*, with its finely-cut stems, rises above it in the foreground. A forest composed of *Lepidodendra* and *Calamites* forms the background to the picture.

Sir Roderick I. Murchison gave the name of "Permian" to certain peculiar deposits of rock found in the province of Perm in Russia; and from these rocks the next period takes its name. "The Permian

rocks," says a modern English geologist, "have of late years assumed great interest, particularly in England, in consequence of the evidence their correct determination affords with regard to the probable extent beneath them of the coal-bearing strata which they overlies and conceal, thus tending to throw a light upon the duration of our coal-fields, one of the most important questions of the day in connection with our industrial resources and national prosperity."

Although the climate during the Permian period was undoubtedly similar to that which prevailed during the Carboniferous period, there are yet strong indications of the existence of glaciers and icebergs. The flora and fauna of this period do not seem to differ greatly from those of the period which preceded it, though there are some new and more developed species of each. But vegetable and animal remains are both somewhat scarce in the Permian formation. The absence of these remains is accounted for by the probable fact that the deposition of the formation was in a great measure by solution. The ocean still claimed a large portion of the surface of the earth. Much of the Europe of to-day was then a vast sea, with here and there an island rising out of its depths.

The Permian period constituted the last of the divisions of the Primary epoch. In reviewing the epoch, we have seen the earth take shape and become divided into land and water. We have beheld the appearance of vegetable and animal life in inferior forms.

At the close of this epoch, fishes were the highest order of beings in the organic world. There were no birds and no mammals of any sort. The only living creatures we find upon land are a few marsh-frequenting reptiles of small size. There were then probably no seasons, no varieties of and no zones of temperature.

Hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of years have passed, as one period of the epoch has given place to another; and yet we are only at the beginning. Three more epochs, each equally great in duration, must pass away before we come to times whose history is written on other material than the rocks. The processes of creation form an interesting and a wonderful study, and the geologist revels amid the discovery of truths far more wonderful than fiction.

## II.

THE Secondary epoch in the creation of the world, if a gradual growth can be strictly called a creation. Geologists have agreed to divide the Secondary epoch into three periods, which they call the *Triassic*, the *Jurassic*, and the *Cretaceous*.

Animal life appears modified and developed in this epoch. In the Primary epoch life seemed confined almost entirely to the water, and took the form of Crustaceæ, and lower orders of fishes. But, as that epoch gave place to the succeeding one, new forms appeared.

Reptiles seemed especially the feature of this period of time. The *Trilobites* had disappeared, and for the first time a turtle was found in the bosom of the sea and on the borders of the lakes. The cryptogamic plants were less numerous, and the conifers more extensive.

In the variegated sandstone formations are found traces of this epoch. This formation is found in great abundance in Germany, and more or less throughout Europe. It covers vast surfaces in the mountainous regions of Bolivia, in South America, and is found also in certain districts of North America. This sandstone is excellent for building purposes. The cathedrals of Strasbourg and Fribourg are built of it, and it seems peculiarly adapted to their style of architecture. Whole cities in Germany are constructed from material drawn from its quarries.

The seas of the *Triassic* period, judging from the shells which remain to us from this period, contained great varieties of mollusca, twelve different genera of Saurian reptiles, turtles, and six new genera of fishes protected by a cuirass. Traces of gigantic reptiles have been found, one of which is called the *Cheirotherium*, or *Labyrinthodon*, from the complicated arrangement of its teeth. Another reptile of great dimensions was the *Nothesaurus*, a species of marine crocodile.

It has been a question, from certain footprints which are found in great numbers on the rocks in the neighbourhood of the Connecticut river, whether enormous birds like the ostrich did not exist at this period; but, as no skeletons of birds have been found, the general opinion among geologists is that these tracks must have been those of some other creature.

Ferns attaining to the height of trees grew in greater variety than in the previous period, and on the rocks underneath them crept huge reptiles, unlike anything which now exists.

"The footprints of the reptilian animals of this period," says Figuier, "prove that they walked over moist surfaces; and, if these surfaces had been simply left by the retiring tide, they would generally have been obliterated by the returning flood, in the same manner that is seen every day on our own sandy shores. It seems more likely that the surfaces on which fossil footprints are now found, were left bare by the summer evaporation of a lake; that these surfaces were afterward dried by the sun, and the footprints hardened, so as to ensure their preservation before the rising waters, brought by flooded muddy rivers, again submerged the low, flat shores, and deposited new layers of salt, just as they do at the present day round the Dead Sea and the Salt Lake of Utah."

The geological formation of the *Triassic* period consists of layers of variegated sandstone, alternating with red marl, while, as subordinate rocks, are found deposits of a poor pyritic coal and of gypsum. Saliferous beds, twenty to forty-five feet thick, alternate with clay deposits, the whole sometimes attaining a thickness of nearly five hundred feet.

At Würtemberg, in Germany, and in several places in France, the rock-salt of the saliferous formation is an important branch of industry. Some of the deposits of the *Triassic* age, we are told, are at great depth, and can only be worked by excavating shafts and galleries.

The red colour of the new Red Sandstones and marls is caused by peroxide of iron. Professor Ramsay considers that all the red-coloured strata of England, including the Peruvian, old Red Sandstone, and even the old Cambrian formation, were deposited in lakes or inland waters. The remains of land-plants, and the peculiarities of some of the reptiles, found in this strata, seem to confirm Professor Ramsay's opinion.

There were at this period few islands or mountains. There were large lakes or inland seas, with flat and uniform banks.

Lecoq says, in his 'Botanical Geography': "During this long period the earth preserved its primitive vegetation; new forms are slowly introduced, and they multiply slowly. But, if our present types of vegetation are deficient in these distant epochs, we ought to recognise also that the plants which in our days represent the vegetation of the primitive world are often shorn of their grandeur. Our *Equisetaceæ* and *Lycopodiaceæ* are but poor representations of the *Lepidodendrons*; the *Calamites* and *Asterophyllites* had already run their race before the epoch of which we write."

The earliest trace of a mammal which has been found in the secondary rocks, is a molar tooth of a small predaceous animal of the *Microlestis* family, whose nearest living representative appears to be the kangaroo rat. This fossil tooth was found in some grey marl in England.

Among the last formations of the *Triassic* period are certain beds of white and cream-coloured limestone, known to geologists and quarrymen under the name of "White Lias." Some specimens of this stone, when broken at right angles to its bedding, present curious dendritic markings, bearing a singular resemblance to a landscape, with trees and water.

The second division of the Secondary Epoch is called the *Jurassic* period, receiving its name from the Jura mountains, that range being composed of rocks deposited in the seas of that period. The *Jurassic* period is subdivided into two sub-periods, known as the *Lias* and the *Oolite*.

The *Lias* is an English provincial name given to an argillaceous limestone, which, with marl and clay, forms the base of the *Jurassic* formation. Zoophytes, Mollusca, and fishes of a peculiar organization, and reptiles of an extraordinary size and structure are found in the *Lias*-clay. Cuvier exclaimed, when the drawings of the *Plesiosaurus* were sent him, "Truly, this is altogether the most monstrous animal that has yet been dug out of the ruins of a former world!"

The *Plesiosaurus* belongs, as its name indicates, to the lizard family.

A description of this animal reads as follows: "The Plesiosaurus was a marine, air-breathing, carnivorous reptile, combining the characters of the head of a lizard, the teeth of a crocodile, a neck of excessive length, resembling that of a swan, the ribs of a chameleon, a body of moderate size, a very short tail, and, finally, four paddles, like those of a whale. Its enormous long neck comprises a greater number of vertebræ than the neck of either the camel, the giraffe, or even the swan. The body is cylindrical and rounded, like that of the great marine turtles. It was, doubtless, naked, *i.e.*, not protected with the scales or carapace with which some authors have invested it, for no traces of such coverings have been found near any of the skeletons which have been hitherto discovered."

In England, in the quarries of Lyme Regis, have been found numerous remains of the Ichthyosauri, another marine monster of ancient times.

We are told that "in 1811 a country girl, who made her precarious living by picking up fossils, for which the neighbourhood was famous, was pursuing her avocation, hammer in hand, when she perceived some bones projecting a little out of the cliff." These bones, when they were carefully excavated, proved to be those of "a monster some thirty feet long, with jaws nearly a fathom in length, and huge saucer-eyes, which have since been found so perfect that the petrified lenses have been split off and used as magnifiers."

This was the complete skeleton of an Ichthyosaurus. These dragons of the sea had jaws eight feet in length and one hundred and sixty teeth. Whenever a tooth was lost in the monster's head by contests with other animals or in any other manner, nature soon replaced it; for at the inner side of the base of every old tooth there is the bony germ of a new one. The eyes of this monster were larger than those of any animal now living, their size frequently exceeding that of the human head, and were an optical apparatus of wonderful power and singular perfection, capable of performing the office of microscope and telescope at pleasure. Its food was fish and smaller individuals of its own race, which it swallowed without masticating. It was essentially voracious and destructive.

The *Ptarodactyle* was a still more wonderful creature of this period. In size and general form, and in the character of its wings, this genus resembled our modern bat and vampires, but it had a beak elongated like the bill of a woodcock, and armed with teeth like the snout of a crocodile; its vertebræ, ribs, pelvis, legs and feet resembled those of a lizard, while it was partly covered with naked skin. "It was, in short," says a writer, "a monster resembling nothing that has ever been heard of upon earth except the dragons of romance and heraldry."

"With flocks of such-like creatures flying in the air and shoals of *Ichthyosauri* and *Plesiosauri* swarming in the ocean, and gigantic crocodiles and tortoises crawling on the shores of primeval lakes and

rivers—air, sea and land must have been strangely tenanted in these early periods of our infant world."

The vegetation of the *Jurassic* period was peculiarly rich and abundant. The tree-ferns of the *Carboniferous* period had lost their enormous dimensions, but were still beautiful in form. The *Cycads* now appeared for the first time, and seem to be forerunners of the palms, which appeared in the next epoch.

In the next, or *Oolitic* sub-period, mammals began to make frequent appearances. Hitherto they had been limited to a single species. These early mammals exhibited the peculiar characteristic of the kangaroo and the opossum, in that the young were transferred in a half-developed state to an external pouch upon the abdomen of the mother, and there remained until they became perfected.

During the *Oolitic* period, bees, butterflies, and dragon-flies appear on the earth for the first time.

The *Ceteosaurus*, the bones of which have been discovered in England, was a species of crocodile, and probably the largest creature that ever walked upon the earth.

We are told by a modern writer that "a full-grown *Ceteosaurus* must have been at least fifty feet long, ten feet high, and of proportionate bulk. In its habits it was probably a marsh-loving or riverside animal," and was not apparently carnivorous, which was certainly a great blessing to the smaller animals with which it was surrounded.

The *Ramphoryuchus* was a creature similar to the Pterodactyle, already described, except that it had a very long tail.

The *Telosaurus* was another formidable-looking reptile, about thirty feet in length, resembling a crocodile, and coated with a cuirass both on the back and belly.

Corals appear in great abundance during this epoch.

In the last formation of the *Jurassic* period, we notice the first bird; the remains of a bird, with feet and feathers, having been discovered, but without a head.

The name *Cretaceous* (from *creta*, chalk) is given to the third division of the Secondary Epoch, because the rocks deposited by the sea are almost entirely chalky in their character. This is not the first appearance of carbonate of lime, however. It is discovered in the *Silurian* period, and in the *Jurassic* formation; but the accumulations are vaster during the *Cretaceous* period than during any other. The limestone formations are composed of the shells of innumerable *Zoophytes* and *Mollusca*, most of them microscopic in size, which existed at this period. Chalk, placed under the microscope, will attest to the truth of this, showing it to be composed of the most wonderful shells of minute size. The strata of chalk, where thickest, are from 1,000 to 1,200 feet in thickness. Let anyone compute, if he can, the number of microscopic creatures which must have existed and perished to form these vast deposits.

In the basin of the Baltic Sea may still be observed the phenomena

taking place, which specially distinguished the Cretaceous period. The bed and coast-line of that inland sea are slowly encroaching upon the water by the constant deposit of calcareous shells, so that in time the sea is certain to be filled with the deposits.

Palms appear for the first time, some of them differing little from those of our own period. Ferns and cycads lose their importance in numbers and size; traces of the alder, the wych-elm, the maple, and other trees known to us, are discovered.

The seasons are no longer marked by indications of central heat; zones of latitude already show signs of their existence. The pike, salmon, and dory tribes lived in the seas of this period, and became the prey of the sharks and dog-fish. There were still huge reptiles and curious fishes—some of the former exceedingly predaceous in their habits. The *Ichthyosauri* and the *Plesiosauri* became extinct toward the close of the Cretaceous period, giving place to the *Mosasaurus*, a monster who was, by all accounts, the tyrant of the seas.

We find in this age the *Hyleosaurus*, or great lizard of the woods, a reptile from twenty to thirty feet in length. The *Megalosaurus* was another reptile, sixty or seventy feet long, with teeth partaking of the natures of a knife, sabre, and saw. The *Iguanodon* was larger still than the *Megalosaurus*, and had upon its muzzle or snout a hard bony protuberance. The bone of this reptile's thigh surpassed that of the elephant in size, while the form of its feet shows that it was intended to walk upon the ground. It was herbivorous in its habits.

The landscapes at the close of the Secondary Epoch did not differ greatly from those of the present day, except that there was a tropical luxuriance of vegetation and an absence of mountains; and huge, strange monsters wandered about under the trees, flew in the air, or beat the waters of the seas and lakes.

(To be concluded.)

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## A FAMILY SCANDAL.

BY E. E. KITTON.

## I.

HAMMERSTON COURT was a fine old place, red brick when it first began its career, but toned down now to a soft and mellow hue by the storms and sunshine and lichen growths of three centuries. It stood withdrawn from the road in its own Park, but not entirely hidden; its turrets and tall chimneys rose above the oak and elm trees that surrounded it, and were to the villagers a favourite object in the landscape.

It had been Hammerston Hall in the old days, but alas, the family who had owned it, and still owned it, though they could not afford to live there, had fallen upon evil days, and some thirty years back had been obliged to let it.

General Stewart, who had hired it, was a wealthy man with fads<sup>4</sup> of his own, and with a wife of whom the village people said that she was "full of fintoms." They took a fancy to Hammerston, but the house did not suit them. It did not overlook the high road, Mrs. Stewart was sure the trees were too near to be healthy, it did not lend itself to the introduction of modern conveniences, the kitchen was too far from the dining-room, and the owner obstinately refused to allow any structural alterations to be made, so as to bring it into accordance with the Stewarts' ideas.

He did not like their alternative proposition either, but poverty is a stern master, and presently in a far corner of the Park, on a little eminence that overlooked the Mere and the high road to the county town, rose a modern-antique building in the Italian style, mightily picturesque without, and replete within with every sanitary and luxurious device that the middle of the nineteenth century could suggest. Stables to match rose near the house, and gardens and shrubberies sprang up around them both. The soul of the Stewarts was satisfied, whatever else the soul of the Hammerstons might be, and little by little Hammerston New Hall stole away the title from the older house, whose tenants, being quiet and easy-going people, were quite ready to yield the precedence to their more distinguished neighbours.

The next tenants of the old house were of more ambitious inclinations and dated their letters from the Court. The Hammerston family were still away, endeavouring to retrieve their fortunes, and raised no protest. Either they no longer cared, or pride forbade them to issue an objection that they were powerless to maintain.

Philip Hammerston, whose recklessness thirty years ago had put the finishing stroke to the family ruin, had gone abroad and settled there, and none of his sons had been known to revisit the place. The estate was entirely in the agent's hands, and there was no appeal from his arrangements, not even as regarded the Stewarts at the Hall, or the Stevensons at the Court.

There was friendship between these two houses. Geraldta Stewart and Edie Stevenson were sworn allies, and the same might be said of John Stevenson and Anna Stewart, but whereas Edie and Geraldta were essentially creatures of this visible world, enjoying life's pleasure to the full, John and Anna were visionaries and enthusiasts, dwellers in another sphere, aiming rather at the improvement than the enjoyment of the world they lived in.

## II.

THEY were all seated together one autumn afternoon in the morning room at the Court. The days were drawing in, for it was towards the end of October; shadows were darkening in the room in spite of the broad windows that looked across the Park, and rising mists shrouded the ripening tints of the trees withdrawing further and further into the distance. Anna Stewart could scarcely take her eyes away from gazing on the mysterious, dreamy landscape.

"To-morrow," she said, with a long sigh, "these people will be here for the shooting, and there will be a continual popping of guns all round the Park. I dislike the shooting season; all the more since young Bartrum shot the crown of my hat as I was coming home from old Graves' cottage. I have little sympathy with the people it brings down, and the modern system of wholesale slaughter disgusts me."

"Oh, we know all about that!" said her sister in off-hand fashion. "You can spare us your lecture on the cruelty and unsportsman-like character of it all. You and John can talk it over together. Let us get on about those theatricals now. It is our last chance of a quiet discussion, for Edie and I have not a soul above the company of the shooting party like you. Now what about getting the school-master in to help?"

"Nobody could look the part of the Italian Count better, it is certain," said Edie; "and mother says she does not see why he should not be asked; he can easily be taught to keep his proper place."

"I think," said John seriously, "that you will be wiser to leave him alone. The very fact that you are prepared to teach him to keep his place should be a warning to you. Much better not to place temptation in his way than to have to check him for presumption that you yourselves have provoked."

"Is it exactly consistent for you to object to our bringing him

amongst us and treating him as an equal?" suggested Geralda. "I thought you went in strongly for the equal rights of all men."

"I do not understand that you mean to admit him to equal rights. If he is to be here on the same footing as all the rest of the guests, you are acting more in accordance with my ideas of what should be than I imagine is the case. If he is not, I fancy from what I have seen of Villars that he is not the man to submit to be either patronised or snubbed. I advise you to leave him alone."

"He looks rather spit-fiery," said Edie; "and Villars is such an awfully romantic, melodramatic sort of name! I wonder Mr. Carrington had the courage to bring a man into the place with a name so suggestive of a penny novelette."

"Did you ever read a penny novelette?" questioned Anna. "I really should have thought that they did not come much in your way."

Edie gave her an impatient glance and did not condescend to take further notice of her remark.

"I do not see," she went on, "why John should be the only one who is allowed to utilise the talent of this young man. John may read Greek with him, and John may make him help in getting up lantern lectures; why should we not be permitted to make him of use in our theatricals?"

"The case is so utterly different that you would return answer to yourself if you looked the matter fairly in the face," said John. "Indeed, you do know that there are fifty objections to your plan, but you are one of those people who make a motto for themselves: 'Do what you like, come of it what may,' and I am not sufficiently quixotic to attempt to argue you out of your course, when I know beforehand that it is trouble thrown away. Anna, I believe you are as ready as I am to leave this matter in the hands of Edie and Geralda. Will you come with me and look over the statement of our allotment scheme? I am afraid it has not worked out quite satisfactorily this first year, and Villars has discouraged me by saying that he believes it more likely to go backward than forward in the future."

Edie and Geralda gave one another a significant nod of satisfaction as the other pair of friends withdrew to John's private study, and seating themselves closer together proceeded to plan out the entertainment according to their own wishes.

Edie was well aware that she could twist her father and mother round her little finger, and as she could foresee no evil consequence to herself that could possibly arise from intimacy with the second master of the little village grammar school, she determined to have him for one of the actors; for to ask must be to have where Miss Stevenson was concerned. She was sure of herself as regarded falling in love below her station, and if any of her acquaintance did it—it was their look-out, and rather the fashionable thing nowadays.

So the second master was asked to share in the pastimes of the aristocratic inmates of the Court, and though he did not jump at the chance, as Edie had more or less expected him to do, he deliberated and agreed. She wondered that a master in a school, so little better than a board-school, did not show that he felt himself honoured by such an invitation, but from the bearing of Francis Villars one might have supposed that he thought himself as good as she was. And he did; if it occurred to him to think about it at all.

He was terribly candid too, as a critic. The ladies had intended to train and instruct him, and lo! he began at the outset to put them in the right way of doing it. They did not much like it, but he was so obviously right that they were obliged to give in. Geralda had thought herself an authority on the subject of elocution, and the master from the Grammar School showed her the only effective way in which her part could be rendered.

In a weak moment she asked him if he did not think the play itself was splendid.

"How do you want me to judge it, Miss Stewart?" he asked. "As amateur work it is good, shows distinct promise. You would not wish me to compare it with the work of a regular playwright, of course."

"How did you know it was written by an amateur?" she asked, rather blankly. "Did Miss Stevenson tell you?"

"I have not been told anything about it," he answered smiling. "I judged that from its style and subject. It is a good idea; the audience cannot say they have seen it too many times already, and if you let the author's name leak out it will add considerably to the interest."

Nevertheless Mr. Villars's commendation was not to Miss Stewart's taste. She had fully intended that the authors' names—her own and that of a school-friend—should leak out, but she had expected everyone to be really surprised at the discovery that amateurs had produced this masterpiece. Mr. Villars went on to suggest that certain alterations in the last scene would add to the strength of the catastrophe, and this was so clearly the case that Geralda bit her lip with chagrin, and then agreed a little sullenly to the alteration.

"I really think you will find your play a success, Miss Stewart," he went on. "It is not bad in itself, and the novelty of it will go far. It is wise of you to take up a fresh thing, and that in the melodramatic line, instead of going in for one of the old-established plays. Plenty of people aim at 'Romeo and Juliet,' for instance, and fail as a matter of course."

"We were rather thinking of giving the balcony scene after our play was over," said Geralda, somewhat stiffly; for how did this young man from the grammar school know what people in her rank of life were in the habit of doing? "We wished you to take the part of the hero."

"Me?" he exclaimed, with a great deal too much energy. "Oh, I must beg you to hold me excused. It is a part—in fact, I could not undertake it."

He spoke so decidedly, and turned away with such an air of having finished the subject, that Geralda found herself unable to say a word more. But she thought within herself that the young man was not so easy to keep in his place as she had expected, and she half repented of having done him the honour of admitting him to share in their diversions.

And then at night, as she sat in luxurious solitude over her bedroom fire, the vision of the young man with his easy graceful bearing and his unconscious air of equality and independence, would rise before her to vex and please her. She could recall no one amongst her acquaintance with such perfect manners, or such indifference to her own charms.

Suddenly Geralda knew the reason of her feeling of offence against him. She had intended to take Juliet's part herself, and Villars had not merely refused to play Romeo, he had not even asked who was to be his Juliet. He had not asked, because he did not care; and Geralda blushed in the privacy of her own room as she realised that she did. Then she remembered John Stevenson's warning and the scorn with which she had received it, and she resolved that the intimacy with the schoolmaster should not be a mistake.

The great entertainment was fixed for a few days after Christmas and was to take place at the Court, the fair promoters agreeing in the opinion that the ancient style of the building was more in consonance with the character of their drama than the modern architecture and adornments of the Hall.

Until the evening of the performance Villars had come merely for the rehearsals, leaving as soon as they were over, but on this occasion John insisted that he was to be invited to dine and sup like all the other performers who were not staying in the house.

"He is a gentleman, Edie," he said; "and if you have anything to do with him at all, you must treat him as a gentleman."

"I have not the slightest objection," answered Edie. "I do not care how many of your friends you ask to the house. Have Miss Peek from the village school too, if you like."

However, Mr. Villars declined the dinner. Holiday season though it was, he had work on which he was glad to spend as much time as possible. He would arrive in good time for the play, and would remain for the rest of the evening.

It was an evening of tremendous excitement, both at the Hall and in the village, for so many guests had been invited as spectators that the whole staff of Hall servants ran hither and thither in as great confusion and enthusiasm as the actors themselves, and all the village people had turned out to watch the carriages go by with their pairs of horses, and, if possible, get a glimpse of the occupants.

John Stevenson and Francis Villars carried the coolest heads amongst the company of actors, for Anna Stewart had suddenly turned nervous with regard to her own performance, and Edie and Geralda were smitten with distrust of their coadjutors. But these two proved themselves a tower of strength, performing their own parts with most convincing and realistic exactness, and deftly supplying the deficiencies of those who were less capable. Anna, who played the part, a minor part, of the heroine's young sister, making her first appearance as the bearer to the Count of a message of importance, found her memory and her courage both fail her at once. Before she had time to do more than cast a terrified glance at Villars, she found him delivering a speech which was certainly not in the original draft of the play, but which led up to her part and gave her time to recover head and spirit. The gratitude that she beamed upon him was taken by the audience for a representation of sly coquetry, on which she was afterwards congratulated. And Anna's experience was similar to that of many others, even those who had been most confident beforehand.

The play was a success; there were shouts of laughter at the comic speeches, suitable exclamations when the matter ran to tragedy, and considerable applause throughout, and Geralda had to own that the credit of the success was due to John and Mr. Villars.

"I think you all did remarkably well," said a handsome old lady, to whom Geralda had uttered this opinion. "There was life and spirit in all your acting, and the way in which Anna made eyes at the Count was nothing short of amazing in that sober-minded young woman. She has missed her vocation; she ought to have gone on the stage."

"Do you think she did so well? We thought her rather one of the dull ones at the rehearsals. But then so we did John."

"They have made amends to-night. I must congratulate them. By the way, who is the Count? I thought I knew all the young men in the neighbourhood too well to be taken in by a theatrical disguise, but I must confess that he baffles me. Too broad for young Willoughby, too tall for Joe Finch, carries his head too high for Harry Martin; totally unlike all the rest. Yet Mr. Stevenson told me it was an exhibition of local talent."

"And so it is, Mrs. Foster," answered Geralda, laughing. "But the Count is a little out of the range of your acquaintance. His name is Villars, and he is the new master at the Grammar School."

"The Grammar School must have begun to aspire! Where is the young man? I want you to bring him to introduce to me. Villars!" mused Mrs. Foster. "Never knew the name, and yet there seemed something familiar about the Count."

Geralda found the Count standing with a group of his fellow-actors, enduring the raillery of a bevy of girls and men who had been con-

cerned as spectators only, and carried him off to her friend, with whom he was speedily engaged in animated talk.

"You have never been in the neighbourhood before?" said Mrs. Foster in answer to one of his remarks. "That puzzles me, for I certainly must have met you somewhere. Do you not recognise me as an old acquaintance?"

"I do not, to my regret," replied Villars, with a bow; "and I do not think that you would be easily forgotten."

His eyes conveyed a compliment that pleased Mrs. Foster. She made room for him beside her on the settee and continued the conversation.

"It is odd, for I seem to remember you, and seem to remember you here, where you say you are a stranger. It must be that I have met some of your people, and you recall them to me. I have seen a good deal in my time."

"You have travelled probably, and in that case it is possible that you may have met somebody belonging to me; but we are not illustrious people."

"Is not your home in England? You imply that your friends are only to be met abroad."

"My father is an artist living in a little place not far from Florence, and my sister follows in his steps and studies under him. I have no artistic talent, and I wished to live in England; so I came over and got what training and what work my purse and my capabilities could attain. My mother is dead. She was an Italian lady."

"Ah, that accounts for your natural assumption of the Count's part! I thought the Italian phrases fell trippingly from your tongue. What do you think of Hammerston and the dear old house?"

"I think that if I were the head of the Hammerstons, it would go hard with me to let strangers inhabit it. You know the place well, Mrs. Foster?"

"All my life long. Mrs. Hammerston, wife of the Philip who hauled down the family colours and fled away thirty years back, was my dearest friend. We were girls together, we married in one year, and kept up our close friendship till her death. She was forty when she died, and her eldest boy was one-and-twenty. He was the father's favourite. Walter was hers, and a brave boy he was. Well do I remember him as I last saw him, bowed down with grief over his mother's open grave. I was fain to comfort him, but he could not bear consolation then, and the next I heard of him was that he had left the country, without bidding me good-bye, and from that day to this I have never seen him again. They had their faults, those Hammerstons, but they were a fine set of men and a loss to the county. There were all sorts of reports at the time of their going."

Mrs. Foster sat silent for a minute, lost in meditation; then she roused herself and fixed her keen, still beautiful eyes on Villars.

"Young man, I have taken a liking to you," she said. "You must come and see me, if you do not consider it lost time to visit an old woman who does not entertain, and to listen to her stories of the past; and come soon, for there is a mystery in your being at Carrington's school that I want to fathom."

Villars accepted her invitation frankly, and avowed that nothing interested him more than the said stories of the past. He was especially interested in the Hammerstons; it seemed so melancholy a thing that they should have to live in exile from so fair an estate. What were the reports circulated with regard to their going?

Mrs. Foster thought awhile, and answered with an air of reservation:

"There was some quarrel between the father and the sons. Some said that it began between young Philip and Walter, some that only Walter and his father were concerned. Some said that Walter had already fallen into bad ways—he was only nineteen—and that his gambling debts helped to ruin his father; some said that the quarrel was about a woman. It matters little after all these years. Walter must be well-nigh fifty now, and his father will soon be gone to his account."

"Where is he—the father?"

"At Heidelberg, I suppose; that is where he settled at first. He married again, but the second wife is dead, and now I hear that Philip is dead also and the old man is left alone. Philip did not marry, and of Walter we know nothing."

Here their conversation was broken in upon by others of the company, and Mrs. Foster seemed not ill-pleased to have it so.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said one of the servants to Villars as he left that night, "but I heard you saying to Mrs. Foster that you took interest in the old family. My grandfather was Mr. Hammerston's man, and there's nothing he likes better than talking of the Squire and Madam, if you'd care to hear anything about them."

"Was he really, Graves?" answered Villars pleasantly. "Thank you. I will look him up and have a chat with him."

### III.

OLD Graves lived in a white-washed cottage, quaintly pretty with its rustic porch and the vine running over all its walls beneath the overhanging thatch. He was a hale old man of threescore years and fifteen, past work, but with a little annuity that covered all his modest expenses. His wife, a second venture in the way of matrimony, was many years his junior, and whilst attending most carefully to his wants and comforts, was quite ready in other things to go her own way and let him go his.

In summer he was happily employed in pottering about his well

kept garden, or sitting with his pipe and newspaper on the bench in the porch, ready for a gossip with every passer by. In these wintry days he was compelled to retreat to the warm shelter of his front parlour, and here Villars soon found himself a welcome guest.

A gift of a packet of superior tobacco first opened the old man's heart, but patient attention to long-winded reminiscences of days spent in service at the Hall went much further than the tobacco. Fond as he was of his village neighbours, Graves found a long-felt want supplied in the encounter with a man of education and acquaintance with the larger world.

They were sitting together one afternoon when a tap came at the door and Graves' cheery "Come in!" was answered by the appearance of Anna Stewart.

"Mr. Villars!" she said, recognising him with surprise. "I did not know that you and Graves were friends."

"Mr. Graves is kind enough to invite me in for an occasional gossip," answered Villars. "I find him more of an authority on the history of the neighbourhood than Mrs. Foster herself; and that is saying a good deal."

"Mr. Villars is rarely taken wi' the place," said Graves, who in retiring from service had returned to the use of his native tongue. "We was just sayin' that there ain't such another house in the county as Hammerston Hall. Beg pardon, Miss Anna! You'd call it the Court."

"Indeed, I would not, if the matter was left to me. It was a disgraceful thing to let the new house filch the old name away, and if I could be head of the Hammerstons I would live in the old house and call it by the old name. But I cannot manage it, I am afraid."

"Not unless you could find up the heir, Miss Anna, an' marry him. It wouldn't be no ways unsuitable; I'd like you rarely well for Madam Hammerston."

Anna laughed.

"Thank you for the compliment. I know it is worth a good deal from you. I will make a bargain with you: you find the heir and make him propose to me, and I promise to marry him and settle you rent free in that delightful little gardener's lodge that you say you helped to plan. Is it not good of me, Mr. Villars?"

"It shows great faith in the Hammerstons' virtues and Graves' wisdom," answered Villars. "I think Graves himself, if he could regard it dispassionately, would call it a case of buying a pig in a poke. You had better leave a loophole for escape somewhere."

"Oh, no! I will trust to Graves. He may find an insuperable difficulty in the way of discovering the heir, and of course if he is not produced in reasonable time, I shall be off the bargain. How long do you want, Graves? Two years?"

"Well," pondered Graves solemnly, "I'd say two year, for I don't

hold wi' young ladies waitin' till they're losin' their bloom. What I du like is to see a young couple wi' young children. So we'll say two year, Miss Anna, an' Mr. Villars 'll be our witness. Here, sir; you just write down the day o' the month in this here old table-book o' mine, an' set down your name below it. Likeless we might forget it if we'd nothin' to go by."

"We will write the date there, Graves, but it is rather a public place for the real agreement. You had better have that put down on a separate paper and hand it over to me for safe keeping. 'Miss A. S. agrees to wait two years for the appearance of the heir to the Hammerston estate,'" continued Villars, repeating the words that he was jotting down on a leaf of his pocket-book. "There, Miss Stewart! I have only given your initials, so it is not a very compromising document even if it should fall into strange hands."

"I hope it won't!" cried Anna, suddenly awakening to alarming possibilities. "I am afraid it is rather a foolish sort of joke after all."

"Confined to a narrow and very safe circle, at the worst," said Villars, to reassure her, as he pocketed the slip of paper. "I must be going now. I have a fellow coming to me for a lesson at five, and it is half past four already."

That was the first and last time of Anna Stewart breaking in upon the gossip of the friends, but more than once, Geralda, to whom Anna had reported the mere fact that she had met Villars at the cottage, dropped in on some more or less unnecessary errand, and more than once Villars encountered her as he left, and had to bear her company as far as their roads lay together. It was not a pleasing arrangement to him, for he invariably left old Graves full of thought over what he had heard, and a little provoked at having as yet been unable to bring the old man to the point on which he particularly desired information.

#### IV.

PATIENCE was at last rewarded. There came a day in February, one of those moist, mild days that set the human heart yearning for what it has not, a bliss that lies far away in the immensity of past or future; a bliss that even in the midst of the strong desire the heart knows to be unattainable. The earth, possessed with the same spirit of strong desire, puts forth the first flowers of the year, fragile snow-drops and sensitive yellow aconites, forerunners of the beauteous hosts that she is preparing for the sunny months to come. More fortunate than her children, her dream of love and summer will be realised.

Villars found old Graves sitting on his garden bench, his hands resting on the round head of his favourite stick. It was a stout

staff that had belonged to his father, who, in the long watches entailed by his calling as a shepherd, had covered it with a series of tiny pictures, delicate as an etching, the figures of which were first scratched with the point of a knife and then rubbed with nettle juice to darken the outline.

"Them pictures are every bit as good as the gays in a book," Graves would say, as he looked at the stick and pointed out favourite figures; and the sketches were indeed well executed and full of life and spirit.

Villars had begun to find his way about the intricacies of the design, and he turned the stick round to-day to have a look at the figure he most admired; a shepherd's dog with a head like a mop and a tail conspicuously absent. It was supposed to be a portrait of one that the artist had greatly prized; "a raal ol' Smiffel (Smithfield), such as you don't see every day."

"You will have to leave this stick to me in your will, Graves," said Villars, handling it affectionately. "I have grown so fond of it that I do not think anyone could value it more."

"I do' know about that, sir," answered Graves. "If so be that the heir o' the Hammerstons du turn up, I look to leave it to him. The Squire an' Madam both of 'em used to take a deal o' notice o' that stick, an' as for young Walter, he an' my father 'ud sit an' crack about them pictures by the half-hour together. Well, well! They're all gone, an' I don't deny that Madam—dear lady that she was—wasn't taken away from the evil to come. The troubles kem thick an' fast after she went."

"You were there in the midst of them, Graves. I warrant that everything that troubled them came home to your own heart."

"You may say that, sir. Ay, I thought a deal of 'em all, an' we'd served the family from generation to generation," said Graves slowly and with misty eyes. "It kem natural to us to look up to 'em, specially the Squire, he bein' the head o' the family, an' the father o' the parish too, as you might say. 'Twas a sore thing for me to hev to think ill of him, an' I've never spoke of all I come to know at that time to any livin' soul. An' now, I do' know how it is, it seem as if I should fare easier if I talked it out wi' you. You see, sir, this is how it was. Madam fell ill, an' we thought at first 'twas a sickness o' no account. Dr. Hayne said 'twas a sort o' narvous fever; she must be well nursed an' fed up wi' strengthenin' things an' kep cheerful, an' he didn't see any call for anxiety. The Squire got a sort o' lady nurse—they weren't such common things in those days as they are now—and there was a tidy lot o' talk about her r'yal highness, as the folks in the village called her.

"I'll give her her due; she did look after Madam in the way o' beef tea an' jellies, an' settin' up at night, but she looked after the Squire tu, an' we didn't seem to think that was in the agreement. I didn't like her nayther; she'd a way with her that didn't go down wi'

me, of pryin' into everything that concerned the Squire an' Madam an' of keepin' all her own things mighty close. As for young Walter, when he come home from college, he didn't take to her at all. He was always eyein' her an' the Squire when they was together, an' he told me more 'an once that he was sure Nurse Mohun was a bad 'un.

"I was wonderful fond o' that boy, but I doubt his goin's on helped to dig his mother's grave. Not that he'd done anything onbecomin' to a gentleman, but he was wild and heedless an' made debts that he couldn't pay. An' Madam knew that the Squire was gettin' close pressed, an' bein' low an' weak a'ready the news o' Master Walter's debts lay heavy on her heart. Nurse Mohun found she couldn't wheedle round him as she did round his father an' brother, an' she took a pleasure in speakin' spiteful of him before Madam, so that his misdeeds was always in remembrance. I don't say she did it out o' deliberate wickedness, but 'twas all the same in its workin's.

"Madam didn't get better, as Dr. Hayne had said she oughter du. She'd a long illness an' at last we all come to know how it 'ud end. The Squire was in a tearin' way an' Nurse was amazin' kind an' thoughtful, lookin' after him an' tryin' to cheer him. Master Walter came on 'em one day when he was settin' in an arm-chair an' she standin' by with her arm round him, supportin' of his head an' speakin' comfortin' words; an' he flared up an' spoke pretty hot, tellin' her that her ways was a scandal an' a disgrace.

"That didn't mend matters. T'other way on instead, for the Squire took agen the boy for that. It kind o' roused him up an' they'd a great row which ended in Master Walter tellin' his father he didn't for a minute blame him, he knew he wasn't thinkin' a disrespectful thought o' Madam—that saint from Heaven, who was slippin' so fast through their fingers, as he called her—it was all that designin' woman. An' every hot word that the poor boy spoke turned up to his injury in the long run.

"Madam died in the early mornin' an' the day that followed was as long as a dozen. The Squire was terrible cut up, as he'd a right to be, for there's no more such ladies as Madam in this world. Nurse, she was mighty kind and thoughtful, lookin' after everything for everyone. An' the day did come to an end somehow.

"Next mornin' came an awful trouble. I told you Madam was taken away from the evil to come. What should come by post to the Squire but a big bill for horse hire an' what not, supplied to Master Walter, an' bein' titchy an' irritable through his great sorrow, he was ready enough to fly out about a smaller one; like the rest on us, when the world ain't goin' right with us. Master Walter was hot an' fiery an' said things that weren't fittin' between father an' son, an' Mr. Philip must needs mix in. They all of 'em said a deal more 'an they meant to say, an' when Mr. Graham, the Rector, came in an'

smoothed things down, it was only the sort o' patch-up that can't last.

"Now Madam had some jewels. They'd bin her mother's an' she'd kep 'em very choice, chiefless, as I once heard her say to the Squire, that they might be 'in readiness for a rainy day.' A big bill o' the Squire's own, this time, came in the day before Madam was buried, an' in the middle o' the mornin', he bein' restless an' fidgety-like, he sent me up to the chest where they was kep, meanin' to look 'em over an' write to a jeweller about sellin' some of 'em to meet this bill.

"The chest stood in Madam's dressing-room, an' it wasn't supposed that anybody in the house beyond the Squire an' me knew what was in it. I oped the leed an' looked in and the jewel case wasn't there. I was regular scared, and must hev said somethin', for glancin' up at the glass panel in the wall I saw that Nurse's face peerin' through the bedroom door to see what I was doin'.

"'Hev you lost somethin', Mr. Graves?' says she, when she knew I saw her, but I wasn't goin' to let on to her what had happened. 'I don't see what I was lookin' for,' says I, very short, an' clapped to the leed an' went off to tell the Squire.

"If I was to try to tell you all that happened that day it wouldn't be a bit o' use. The Squire took it into his wild head that Master Walter'd got the jewels. He was in debt an' his mother might ha' told him where they was; an' who else could anyhow ha' known of 'em? Master Walter, of course, answered him back fierce in his denial, an' insisted that the whole house should be searched. Everybody was ordered into the library an' Mr. Philip an' Mr. Graham was to search, along with old Mrs. Hitchcock, the housekeeper. When we was all got together Master Walter looked round an' said Nurse Mohun wasn't in the room. 'Do ye mean to insult a lady?' says the Squire, very angry, but Mr. Graham said Master Walter was quite right, an' the insult would be to the sarvants if anybody was left out. So they sent me to ask her to be so good as to step that way.

"Where should I find her but just comin' out o' Madam's room, where the dear lady lay in her coffin, little knowin', as she slep' so sweet and peaceful, o' the sore trouble hangin' over her darlin'. 'I've bin in to fetch my Bible,' says Nurse, very pious, an' when I told her what they'd sent me for she kem straight down wi' me holdin' the Bible in her hand.

"Well, they searched an' searched, an' eyther they was bad hands at it or there wasn't aught to find, for they didn't find it. None o' the sarvants knew exactly what was lost, an' there was a deal o' talk after they got together in the hall, but it wasn't so hot as the talk that went on in the library. The end o' that was that Master Walter went away wi' Mr. Graham, an' I had orders to pack all his things an' send 'em down after him. Mr. Philip looked mighty oneasy, for he was fond o' his brother, as he an' Nurse Mohun stood wi' the

Squire watchin' Master Walter walk away. When he was out o' sight Nurse made as though she'd go back upstairs, but the Squire he caught hold of her arm an' kep' explainin' things to her, an' so I left 'em.

"Just then up come the men to screw the coffin down, an' I slipped into the room wi' Mr. Gapp, the butler, to get one more look at the lady we thought so much of. Half an hour later, while I was still hangin' about the landin' outside Madam's room, up comes Nurse, finds the door locked, an' turns upon me to know the reason. She was mighty angry when she knew what had bin done, said it oughtn't to ha' bin done without her knowin', an' ordered me to give up the key to her. Now I do' know what reason I'd had for lockin' that door an' pocketin' the key, but I seemed to feel 'twas what I oughter do, an' now I'd got the key I stuck to it. Howsoever, presently Madam Nurse comes wi' the Squire, an' of course I had to hand over the key to him. 'Leave the door unlocked, Graves,' says he. 'Maybe some o' the sarvants may like to slip in now an' agen to hev another look.'

"So I had to leave it, but I didn't go to bed that night, an' I don't think that door was out o' my sight for more 'an half an hour together all the night. It was about four in the mornin', when I was makin' one o' my little rounds, that I saw there was a light in the room, an' I slipped up very quiet to make sure who was there, thinkin' it might be the Squire gone in to pray. There was a sound like metal clinkin' in the room, an' it came into my mind it might hev somethin' to do wi' the jewels. In I looked, an' there was Nurse Mohun, with a screwdriver, tryin' to draw the screws from the coffin. 'Graves, how you did frighten me, to be sure!' says she. 'I was tryin' to be very quiet, for it ain't exactly a nice thing to do,' says she, 'but I've lost the silver brooch I always wear, an' it seems to me that I must ha' dropped it in the coffin as I was layin' in the wi'lets Mr. Philip brought up.' 'You'll excuse me, ma'am,' says I, 'but I don't think it's precisely the right thing to disturb the last sleep o' the dead for a matter o' no more consequence than a brooch;' an' wi' that I took the screwdriver out o' her hand, an' giv her the candle, an' showed her out o' the door, very polite. There's no denyin' that I felt rather pleased to hev the chance o' settin' her down a bit, an' I could see she was cruelly wexed at bein' done out o' gettin' that brooch.

"Seems to me now that I was a rare old dunderhead. I oughter ha' looked into that coffin myself to see what she was really huntin' after. 'Tisn't likeless she'd try such a game as that for just a common silver brooch! I might ha' saved Master Walter a deal o' sorrow maybe, if I'd looked in, but the Squire set such store by that nurse, an' Madam was always so tender over the Squire's wishes an' likin's that it didn't seem right to be pryin' into the coffin to make trouble for him.

"I didn't leave that room agen till 'twas light an' the household

was about, an' at noontide we buried the best lady that ever I waited on. Master Walter was at the funeral, but the Squire didn't speak to him, an' he didn't come back to the Hall. Then the Squire went foreign wi' Mr. Philip, an' Master Walter went foreign by himself, and where Nurse Mohun went I do' know an' I do' care, but before the year was out they said she an' the Squire was together. For all that she was such a fine nurse, she done naught but harm at Hammerston."

Throughout this narrative Villars had carefully abstained from uttering anything more than the exclamations and questions necessary to show that his interest was unflagging. A glance at his countenance would, however, have been sufficient for that.

He gazed thoughtfully into the old man's face now that the story was ended.

"Do you mean, Graves, that those jewels were stolen by Nurse Mohun and dropped into the coffin for concealment during the search?" he said slowly.

"Maybe I du think that, maybe I don't," answered Graves. "There's nothing to show eyther way, an' it don't matter much now."

"Walter Hammerston might think differently. Even now, at this last, he might like to clear himself in his father's eyes."

"The Squire might ha' known when he got cooled down, that Master Walter couldn't du a thing like that. He must ha' known that this many a year."

"But they have never been reconciled. Pride may have kept your Master Walter from going to his father when he had no proof of his innocence to carry with him. Let me write down your story and send it him. It would be something, though I would rather have incontestable proof."

"Ay, sir. Would the Squire be likely to take the gossip of an old man agens't the word o' the woman he gev Madam's name to? An' there's nothin' I know for fact, when all's said an' done," said Graves, shaking his head despondently. "If what I've thought in my own head is how the thing was, Madam has her own jewels still, safe wi' her in the family vault, an' there they must bide."

"Was Madam buried in the vault?" exclaimed Villars quickly.

"Where should she be?" returned the old man, offended at the mere suggestion that Mrs. Hammerston should rest elsewhere. "An' how should it concern you, sir, any way?"

"Why, don't you see, Graves, that it makes it easy to verify your suspicions? We could hardly have disturbed a grave on such slender grounds, but to visit a vault is a feasible thing, and by your help Walter Hammerston's name may be cleared!"

"Sir!" said the old man, rising up in his wrath and standing with his tremulous hands resting on the knob of his stick. "Would you dare to disturb my mistress in her coffin for any earthly thing? Who are you that you should dare to speak of it?"

"You told me that Walter was her darling, her best loved son," spoke Villars, in quick defence. "Do you think that she has rested in peace all these years with the evidence of his innocence hidden beside her? Do not you yourself regret that you did not search there years ago? Graves, I will do nothing and urge you to nothing till I have seen the Rector. If I can convince Dr. Redmayne that we have a right to search, surely you will go with him and me to see that all is done with respect and reverence?"

"Ay, go you to him," said Graves scathingly. "Convince Dr. Redmayne that you've a right to pry into his cousin's coffin, an' if he goes, I'll go wi' you!"

## V.

Two days later, Villars walked through the Park on his way to the Court to seek an interview with John Stevenson. It was a mild, bright afternoon, and the sun, now sinking behind distant trees, sent slanting lines of gold over the moist green grass and the coppices where willow buds were swelling, and catkins hung trembling from the hazels.

As he walked along he became presently aware that two girls were advancing towards him on a path that crossed his own, and drawing nearer he recognised the Stewarts. Geralda waved to him to wait for them.

When they came up he saw that her face wore a pleased triumphant look, and that Anna, on the other hand, seemed puzzled and distressed.

"I wanted to give you an early chance of congratulating this silly girl, Mr. Villars," said Geralda. "Only think, Sir Thomas Houston, the richest man in the county, has proposed to her, and my father has had the greatest difficulty in getting her to a grudging half consent. Isn't it a chance that any other girl would jump at? Just think of his horses and his diamonds!"

"And his years!" suggested Villars. "He must be about thirty years older than Miss Anna."

"Oh, no! He can't be more than forty-five, and Anna is three-and-twenty. And everybody thinks so much of him."

"I daresay," said Villars drily.

Anna, meanwhile, looked more and more distressed. It was unpleasant to her in all ways to have so private a matter discussed with a young man who could have no possible right to be consulted, and she could not understand Geralda's motive in stopping him.

"His house is so magnificent too," went on Geralda, adding another argument in Sir Thomas's favour. "My father said it was a blaze of Oriental splendour when it was done up for the Prince's visit two years ago."

"Possibly Miss Anna prefers old English comfort," said Villars, in the same dry tone. "I think I have heard her say that she would be more than satisfied with Hammerston Court, and that is well, since she is pledged to enter into residence there when the time shall come."

"What do you mean?" cried Geralda suspiciously. "Surely, Anna, John Stevenson—why, you would be as likely to marry the Pope as John Stevenson!"

"Mr. Stevenson is in no way concerned," observed Villars. "Miss Anna is engaged to marry the heir of the Hammerstons."

"Mr. Villars," protested Anna uneasily, "that was only a joke, and not a very wise one. And besides it was only conditional."

"I assure you, Miss Anna," replied Villars, "that the matter is by no means regarded as a joke by Graves, and the heir of the Hammerstons has been communicated with and takes entirely his view of it. The young man will be over long before the time to which he is limited, and if this other engagement is proclaimed you will have to reckon with him."

Villars spoke quietly and seriously, and Anna looked the picture of consternation as she listened. She tried to protest, to explain her way out of it, but Geralda's louder voice overbore hers.

"Who is young Hammerston? Where is he? Has he any money?" she asked insistently.

"He is grandson of the last Hammerston who reigned here; he has been brought up abroad; he has more expectations than ready money; and if you appeal to old Graves to-morrow, he will be able to give you all the information that you require," answered Villars. "And now, ladies, I must ask you to allow me to hasten on. I have urgent business with Mr. John Stevenson."

Anna caught at his arm.

"Mr. Villars, I beg you to give me that foolish paper that we wrote at Graves' cottage," she said imploringly.

"I cannot, Miss Stewart," he answered, looking gravely into her face. "It is already in young Hammerston's hands, and he refuses to part with it. But trust me! No harm shall come of it to you, I solemnly assure you. Do not be uneasy, on that matter or with regard to Sir Thomas; but remember that you cannot be engaged to him."

He walked on and left poor Anna in evil case. Geralda, though pleased enough to learn that her sister was within the meshes of another love-affair if she refused to accept Sir Thomas, could not help exhibiting a certain amount of malice as she made inquisitorial research into the matter of which Villars spoke.

Better that Anna should be pledged even foolishly to some stranger than that she should stand between Geralda and Villars, but it would have been pleasanter not to know that she had shared a secret with him. The thought lent a little venom to her speeches.

Villars soon concluded his business with John Stevenson.

"You have always shown yourself my friend," said he at parting, "and I felt that I might ask this of you. Whether right or wrong in law, there is no moral offence in it, and if Graves' idea prove true, I shall feel myself fortified with two such independent and unimpeachable witnesses as you and Dr. Redmayne. Graves and I might be accused of fabricating the case, but with you and a rector at our backs we shall be safe enough. Will you join us at the church at seven o'clock?"

"Without fail. I do not care in the least whether we are within our legal rights or not; law and moral right are not always the same thing, and I take quite your view of the case. We ought to know whether the jewels are there or not, though I confess that I do not see how we are to prove that the nurse put them there."

"I have a certain unreasonable conviction that we shall find the proof with the jewels, and that the old man is to be convinced of his son's innocence before he dies. I do not hold Graves' opinion that it does not matter much now; the truth ought to be known, and as the second Mrs. Hammerston is dead, it cannot hurt her. There was never any public scandal, so it would not have harmed her much in any case. It will be bad for you, though, for if father and son are reconciled they will certainly want to come back to their own house. It is the breach between them that has kept them both abroad."

## VI.

At seven o'clock the old church and churchyard were bathed in a silver sea of glorious moonlight; moonlight so clear and keen that it was easy to read the names on the tall white gravestones. From the base of the church glimmered a little yellow light; then came a grating sound as of the opening of a door long disused, the light was borne into the bowels of the earth and disappeared. Villars and his three companions had entered the Hammerston vault and closed the door upon them.

Graves was there under protest, he had a feeling that their presence was a desecration of the spot that he held so peculiarly sacred; Villars was white with suppressed excitement. The Rector was the calmest of the quartette, and showed a thoughtful anxiety not to leave the key in the lock outside.

For thirty years no one had entered where they now stood, and but for that sin done thirty years before, the place might never have been disturbed again. The bones of Philip Hammerston were little likely to be laid to rest beneath the church in days in which churchyard burials are strictly regulated. It was a strange and solemn meeting-place, and a great awe rested on the four intruders.

With trembling and unwilling finger old Graves pointed out the

spot where Madam lay. Villars approached, and with hands that shook scarcely less than the old man's, attempted to loosen the coffin screws.

It was so futile an attempt that John Stevenson took the tool from him and continued the work himself, Villars the while leaning back against the wall of the vault, trying to control and conceal his agitation. The Rector calmly set down the lantern that he carried and lighted a couple of candles, so that a little circle of light rested round the coffin and made the shadows that filled the corners of the burial-place yet blacker and more mysterious.

The decisive moment came. John Stevenson raised the coffin lid, and there in a mouldering cloth, that had been pinned together with a silver brooch, lay the casket that they sought.

Not a word was spoken. The Rector advanced, and in reverent silence lifted out the package, which Villars received with twitching lips and hands that were still unsteady. Old Graves broke into choking sobs.

Still in silence, John replaced the lid. The Rector took up his lights and led the way into the open air. Once more he secured the door of the vault, and then he turned to Villars and spoke.

"You are satisfied, sir? You hold the proof of Walter Hammerston's innocence in your hands."

"Heaven be praised!" breathed Villars, with a long, deep sigh of thankfulness. "We have not disturbed the dead in vain."

"'Tis that hussy's brooch, an' never a doubt on't!" exclaimed Graves fervently. "An' to think that Madam had that creature's rubbish lyin' beside her all these years—an' me that let it be so!"

"You forgive me now, Graves, for forcing you here to help to clear my father's name?" said Villars in an odd, uncertain voice. "I thank you heartily, and you too, gentlemen, for the help that you have given me to-night."

"Eh? What? Whose name? Good mercy! Who are you? What d'you mean? It's—it's never—Master Walter! Master Walter—my dear! Oh, oh!" And Graves caught the young man's arm in his two hands and hung on to him with tears and sobs and mumblings of delight.

"Master Walter's son, old friend," answered Villars affectionately, "and the heir of the Hammerstons too. I thought you would have known me; Mrs. Foster found me out long ago. Let us go with the Rector now and write a report of all this to send to my grandfather. I will see you safe home later on."

"Master Walter's son! My lad—my own lad!" reiterated old Graves. "To think that, after all, I should see a Hammerston agen before I die! Ay, I'll go with you, an' we'll write to the Squire an' Master Walter an' bid 'em come home agen to their own!"

"We will, Graves, and I think they will come. We will live at the Hall, and you shall have your gardener's lodge, as we agreed."

"An' you'll marry Miss Anna? The dear young lady!"

"Hush!" said John Stevenson, stopping them under the shadow of the lych-gate. "There is Anna herself."

He was right. A white figure was advancing along the road, and it was Anna.

As she drew near, they saw that her face shone as white as her dress in the keen moonlight. She looked deadly ill and full of trouble.

"Is that you, Graves?" she called, in a low, frightened voice, to the indistinct figures in the shadow. "Your wife sent me to the rectory, and the doctor's servants sent me here."

"I'm here, missy, an' the heir o' the Hammerstons too!" cried Graves, quavering but gleeful. "Master Walter, you go to her, an' tell her what we've found."

He released Francis, who went forward and took Anna's hand.

"We have found what will bring back peace to all the Hammerstons," he said. "I have a great deal to tell you, and you—you could not wait till to-morrow for what Graves had to tell?"

"I—I came," panted Anna. "I want to tell Graves that the foolish joke can be carried no further. He must understand that there is no meaning in it; a girl could not bind herself in that way to marry a stranger. Mr. Villars, be generous! Explain it to him, and—and give me back that paper!"

"I cannot, Anna," he answered, in a low voice. "Do not you understand? I am the heir of the Hammerstons, and I cannot let you have the paper. I cannot give you up!"

"You," she said, with a long, astounded gasp—"you?"—and the hot blood rushed up over all her face, and she would have turned to run away.

Francis threw his arm quickly round her and held her fast, while the others went on their way towards the rectory, leaving them behind.

He must have employed potent arguments, for Anna was one of the group round the Rector's study table when the casket was examined, with its contents and its wrapper, and the silver brooch which bore on its back the legend—"G. MOHUN, from A. C."

"The hussy!" ejaculated Graves.

"We shall never know," said John Stevenson thoughtfully, "whether she took the things from greed, or out of a malicious desire to ruin a boy who had offended her. If the former, how she must have schemed and schemed to do what we have done to-night!"



## GHOSTS AND HEALING WATERS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN LOTUS LAND," "THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN," ETC., ETC.



THE RIVER SAALE.

LIFE at Kissingen, as Miss Sutherland had foretold, proved very pleasant. We have already said that the one drawback was the want of an hotel under good and liberal management. The commissariat department at the Hôtel de Russie left much to be desired, and unfortunately we could not discover that the other hotels were any better. "C'est encore le meilleur," said her Excellency to us one morning when we were walking up and down the Avenue at the "Saline," inhaling the vapours that are supposed to cure insomnia and otherwise renovate the jaded nerves. But she

was speaking of the past reputation of the hotel; the management of the previous year and many previous years when it deserved praise. Its reputation under the new proprietorship had still to be made—or marred.

Necessity is the mother of invention; demand creates supply; and presently a new hotel will arise on higher principles; or people will more and more take rooms and houses, and order their meals at restaurants. The proprietor of the Kurhaus, it is said, is about to retire on a colossal fortune, and anyone succeeding him with energy and liberality, would reap an abundant harvest. If we insist upon this very material point, it is that it is of the greatest importance both to the welfare of Kissingen and the comfort of its visitors. With it a sojourn there would be delightful; without it everything is

out of joint. A liberal table, with dishes that are *Kurgemäss* is absolutely necessary to carrying out the "cure": for as the waters and baths are lowering, so there must be a counteracting element in the food taken: and when this fails, renewed health and invigorated nerves will not follow.

So important is this considered, that an official in the form of a Kur-inspector, occasionally pays a visit to the different hotels and dines; but like the inspectors of asylums in the old days, who considerably sent round word of their approaching call, so that everything was in readiness for them; so the visits of the Kur-inspector had no effect whatever upon the hotel management, and produced no good result.

In other ways, thanks to Miss Sutherland's chaperonage, we were quickly *au courant* of the Kissingen life, and before they left on the Wednesday were acquainted with all its ways, walks, and resources.

During that two days and a half, Miss O'Grady exhausted herself and almost turned our hair grey with horror at her numerous ghost stories. So varied had been her own personal experience, and so many had she seen with her own personal eyes, that, as she said, "I often wonder whether I am not a ghost myself."

The only objection that could be urged to this was that Miss O'Grady certainly did not belong to the land of shadows: she could not even be classed amongst Pharaoh's lean kine. There are people going about the world, grim and gaunt and ominous, who at least seem to be on the very borders, if they are not absolute intruders from the unseen land; but Miss O'Grady was not one of these.

Again, we have known, and know, beings so ethereal, so spiritualized, that they almost seem too fragile, too beautiful, and too unearthly to belong of right to this lower world. They have strayed for a while from Paradise; their place amidst the angels is vacant; some day they will return to it, mysteriously, silently as they appeared here, leaving regrets, a sense of desolation, behind them. Nothing grim and gaunt and ominous about these; like Minna Troil, they have only alighted to prove themselves a little lower than the angels.

Again Miss O'Grady was not of these. She was too full of life and energy to be mistaken for anything but a very active agent in this work-a-day world: and if she herself had any doubt about belonging to the Land of Shadows, her friends had none. She religiously went through all her "Kur duties," never diminishing her potions by an ounce of water, or the duration of her baths by the fraction of a minute.

"In fact I rather add to these if I can," she confessed. "They are just like taking a champagne bath, as I told Dr. Diruf, and if he was pleasantly sarcastic about it, I cannot help it. He knew what I meant, perfectly; for we can all imagine things we have never gone through, and imagine them correctly."

It was early morning when this was said. We had begun our "system": our early rising and glasses of water before breakfast.

Between the sips of her own glass Miss O'Grady gave utterance to the above. We were doing likewise and thought it a very nauseous draught.

"Whatever the baths may be, you cannot call this champagne," said E. "Rokaczy waters may be healing, but the remedy is severe."

There were different springs under the one roof, and some took one, some another, according to their various ailments, real or imaginary. But there are fewer *malades imaginaires* at Kissingen than at any of the rival German baths—we have already said so. Pleasure and fashion and dissipation have nothing to do with the



KISSINGEN.

little Bavarian watering-place. There is no casino furnished with gambling tables. The utmost dissipation of which it is guilty consists of concerts and dances: the latter chiefly patronised by the Germans, who sacrifice to Terpsichore as ungracefully as they do everything else; whilst the buzz of conversation between the dances was uproarious.

We were standing near the well this morning, watching the streams of people coming up and struggling for their glasses. Modest and timid ladies had no chance against the coarser, louder element that thought only of itself and its own desires. Time after time the filled glasses appeared, and time after time a gentle hand stretched forth

would be roughly put aside by men or women who had never learned that part of the Church Catechism—their Duty to their Neighbour.

The attendants worked like slaves and were examples of perpetual motion. The glasses, hoisted up from the lower wells on long poles, were seized by eager hands as fast as they were put down. Nothing could exceed the good nature of the officials: and as soon as they got to know by sight those who would not push and struggle, they handed them glasses which no greedy grasping clutch was allowed to pirate.

Yet on the whole people were well-behaved. High and low mixed together. Royalty waited for its glass as meekly as the humblest visitor from a neighbouring town—nay, far more so. The attendants were not allowed to receive fees, under pain of instant dismissal—a somewhat severe rule. There was a box into which visitors could drop a gratuity before leaving, and this was divided at the end of the season: but it seemed very much neglected: we never once saw anything dropped into it.

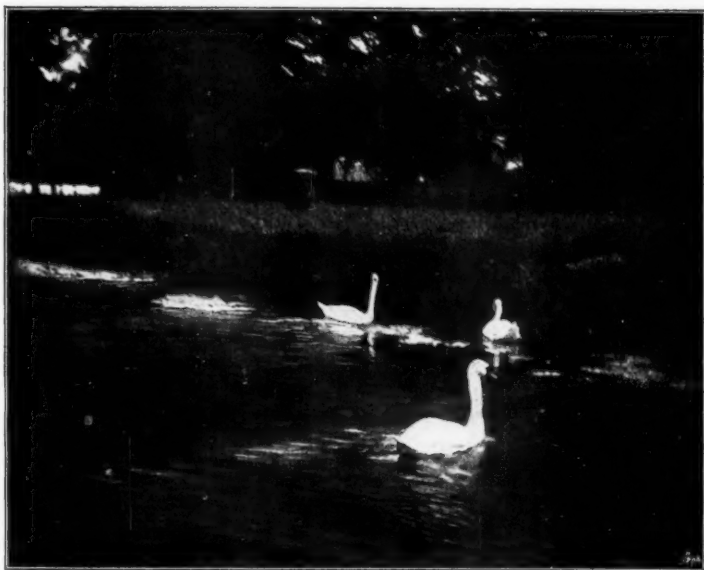
One poor fellow two or three years ago had been seen to take a small gratuity given to him by a grateful visitor. The fact was reported at headquarters—the man was dismissed. Miss Sutherland, ever ready to help the weak and suffering, and extend a hand to those in trouble—heard of the sad case, and went to the authorities to try to get the sentence reversed. But they were inflexible; no appeal was allowed. They assured her that with the best intentions in the world they could not break through their written and established rules. Miss Sutherland, in spite of being law-abiding and generally upholding the Constitution, pleaded the exception. She might as well have pleaded for a change of wind or weather. To the unhappy delinquent—whose sin was surely venial—it meant ruin. He has never prospered since: and one of Miss Sutherland's hundred and twenty-five farewells was to this unfortunate man and his family, in which we may be sure her sympathies were substantially engaged.

Near the well, large round tin erections—looking like brasiers ten thousand times magnified—of hot water were placed, in which those who could not take the waters cold put their glasses, and had the pleasure of drinking a tepid draught that was simply horrible. Others had to mix whey with their water, and the very look of the mixture upset one for the rest of the day. But the Germans apparently have no foolish sensitiveness, and would cheerfully go through—absolutely enjoy—fire and water, flood and flame, to effect a cure; following out their doctor's prescription to the very letter. Here, as in many other things, they are undoubtedly philosophers.

It was amusing to watch the intense earnestness with which they took their draughts. Had life depended upon it they could not have been more solemnly grave. It was especially amusing to watch them

round the hot water apparatus. The lynx eye kept upon the precious tumbler loosed from the hand and deposited in the hot bath. The rush to the rescue if by chance a grasping hand was stretched forth upon the wrong tumbler: the loud exclamation of remonstrance—"Bewahr!"—and the muttered apology "Bitte sehr!" the bowings and scrapings for all the world like ducks in the water—as the wrong was righted.

Some there were who had their own tumblers, and carried them slung round their shoulders like a field-glass. These fastidious ones for the most part took their water through a long glass tube, as they walked to and fro, looking supremely ridiculous—a sort of parody



THE SWANS.

upon a sherry cobbler taken through a straw—a cruel comparison, perhaps. This was done to keep the teeth from the iron in the water, which is supposed to turn them black and brittle, but in reality does not affect them at all.

Many turned out at six for their water, going through the severe exercise of walking until eight, when they had fairly earned their breakfast. A quarter of an hour was supposed to elapse between each glass: and some had to take two, some three, some four glasses in the morning, with a brisk half hour's walk after the last: and a limited recurrence of the process at five o'clock in the afternoon.

To us, Dr. Diruf had been merciful, prescribing only two glasses

in the morning, and nothing later in the day. Thus we had not to turn out much before seven, a privilege for which we were duly grateful. By the time eight o'clock arrived, we felt with Miss O'Grady that having no lift to the third floor was an act which might have been brought in by any jury as culpable manslaughter.

The walk to and fro, to and fro, in the Kurgarten was enlivened by a band, consisting of about forty musicians and a conductor. They really played very well, and would have been a great attraction if their selections had been less trivial. It is a mistake to suppose that the Germans are only—or even chiefly—devoted to classical music. The more slight and silly the piece the more popular it was. When anything was unusually light and foolish and destitute of real music, great was the applause: if now and then a really good and earnest thing was given, only the few listened reverently.

One night when the military band came over from Schweinfurth and performed in front of the Casino, a really splendid selection of classical music magnificently played was received with very quiet approbation; but when at the end of the programme, they suddenly turned to dance tunes and popular airs, the applause was deafening. And the audience was a very typical German one, comprising most of the visitors: from Royalty, who doubtless appreciated the better things, and a fair share of the higher classes, to the rich representative middle class that is said to be the backbone of every country.

Everyone who was English pitied the orchestra, from the conductor downwards. Their duties were heavy, their salaries light. They had to begin at six in the morning and play until eight: the first piece being a chorale, generally the best and most serious piece in the whole programme—but lost to those who did not turn out before seven. At eight o'clock they put up their instruments and departed: to return again at five and play until seven. Later on in the evening they had to play the part of orchestra at the theatre, and when that came to an end they felt that a long and heavy day's work came to an end with it. Many of them looked habitually pale and fagged, after the manner of those who retiring at midnight or later, and rising at five, have a constant feeling of not having had their sleep "out."

Besides this they had to give an occasional concert in the Kursaal, and play whenever there was a dance.

For this heavy labour, it was generally reported that they were paid at the rate of a thaler a day—three shillings—whilst the conductor received forty pounds for the whole season.

It must be borne in mind that this was not an inferior orchestra, but one that played admirably: and it seemed to us that they rose to the occasion—the more classical the piece, the better it was given. One of the musicians was rather fond of giving solos of Schubert's songs: two of his favourites being *Am Meer* and *Du bist die Ruh'*: and he rendered them with all possible expression. His cornet would go

echoing out upon the still, bright air, clear and soft and melodious, now rising to passionate force, now sinking to the gentlest modulation. That such a performer should be so inadequately paid seemed a state of things that could only be found in Germany: and considering the very large amount made by the town out of the visitors—every one of whom is fairly heavily taxed to begin with—we were all agreed that it seemed an illiberal and ungenerous state of affairs. The wonder was how they managed to exist upon the pitiful dole, on which they had to eat, drink and sleep during the twenty-four hours of the day.

The harp in the orchestra was played by a lady—a *gnadiges Fräulein*—who would quietly mount the steps and take her seat amongst the musicians when her turn came. She also played admirably.

As she sat amongst them her decided colour formed a striking contrast to the pallid, thin faces that surrounded her: whilst the garlands that decorated her hat seemed to give brilliancy to the whole stage. Her performance over, she would quietly flit down the steps again and join the moving crowd, where some ardent admirer would present her with a bunch of roses and retire with a series of bows that again reminded one so much of ducks in a pond.

You see we had our little distractions. We watched our neighbours, and the humorous side was very often in evidence. In quiet Kissingen the smallest matter for remark was a *divertissement*.

Fräulein was naturally a very popular member of the orchestra. Whenever she played an admiring crowd stood motionless round it, listening to the golden notes that fell from her fingers: fingers, it must be confessed, that were too often blue and red from the sharpness of the early morning air. There were days when a great coat was a luxury, and ladies buried their ears and their chins in furs: and again there were days when the thinnest of suits and the lightest of summer muslins added to the burden of life.

Fräulein was only a visitor for the season; her home was at Schweinfurth. The Germans thought her very pretty, but then their standard of beauty is to say the least peculiar. As she passed to and fro amongst them, they would gaze at her, and smile benignly, as upon one who was a species of divinity; an inhabitant of a sphere outside their own; who dispensed gold and silver from her finger ends as the Beauty in the Wood dropped pearls and diamonds from her mouth whenever she spoke.

There were times when we thought Fräulein was engaged, and this made her additionally interesting. She was often seen walking with a young man who apparently was seriously disposed, and who certainly did not live upon a thaler a day—unless he spent the whole of it on the pleasures of the table. We thought that when in his company a softer blush overspread her amiable face, a more tender expression. When presenting her with a bouquet, he did not always

retire with the duck-like reverences, but would join her in the sauntering to and fro, her devoted and attentive cavalier for the time being.

Both looked perfectly happy, and we wove a little romance about them in which the dispenser of golden notes was seen as in a vision, the centre of a domestic hearth, cutting bread and butter like Werter's Charlotte, for an army of small mouths, whilst the devoted husband looked on more full of love and admiration than ever. Perhaps the vision was true and prophetic; and perhaps we wove a romance upon a foundation baseless as the fabric of a dream. It may be that Fräulein returned to Schweinfurth in maiden meditation, fancy free; but if so, the young man must have made very bad use of his time—or else his attentions had not found favour in his eyes of his lady-love. That does sometimes happen. In fact who does ever marry their first love "wild and passionate?" A better fate is in store for most; the awakening from their first delusion would be too withering. So it may be that if ever in the next few years we again visit Kissingen, we may find Fräulein still an unappropriated blessing, dropping a shower of golden notes about her from her material harp, and still waiting for that other and deeper harp of life to strike its golden chords and awaken her heart to that subtle music of the soul which here below forms one of our few and fleeting experiences of the raptures of paradise.

But Fräulein was not the only element of romance attached to the orchestra, though she was its only feminine, and therefore most interesting example.

It was reported that the conductor was also engaged, and he quite looked the part. The only thing that made us at all doubtful was that his selections were almost invariably trivial rather than sentimental; light and airy and dancing tunes with which a man in love could have no possible sympathy.

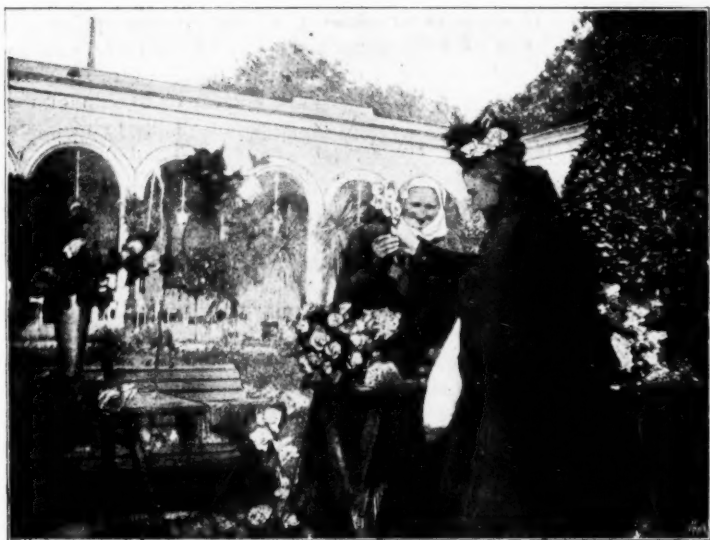
— But when sentiment did come into the programme, then we had no doubt. When, for instance, the soloist would give us his favourite *Am Meer*, or *Du bist die Ruh'*, or *Im Walde*, or Mendelssohn's *Auf flügeln des Gesanges*, then he would put down his bâton, retire to his chair, and close his eyes. A beautiful expression would take possession of his features; and one saw at once that on wings of song he had soared away into the paradise of love, wherein for him there was but one angel, one element of happiness.

At such times we did not doubt the rumour, whilst we devoutly hoped that forty pounds a year was not to keep up the establishment.

The Germans have not our old and "ower true" proverb that Love flies out of the window when Poverty comes in at the door, but they must know something of its experience or they would be more than mortal. It is true they are far more frugal, far more easily satisfied, far more to be commended and imitated, than we with our insular ideas of luxury and extravagance, and so it is seldom enough that does Poverty enter the door, or the wolf is heard howling outside.

Nevertheless, there are limits to everything. It was given to the Man of Ross to be passing rich on forty pounds a year, but we never heard that he had a Gretchen and small mouths to feed. If he had he kept them in the background—shut up in a harem perhaps, or a series of harems—and history is discreetly silent about them. In everyday life, whether it be in sound of the Romantic Rhine or the Turbid Thames (let us be alliterative for once, especially when it is so true) they become problems that change the rhapsodies of lovers into those stern realities of existence most men and women have to meet face to face and do battle with.

Our conductor had all the essentials necessary to a romantic lover.



THE FLOWER-MARKET; BUT NOT OUR PATHETIC FLOWER-SELLER.

He could play Romeo to his Juliet without travestying the *rôle*. He had neither the strut nor the mouthing of modern acting which is only a burlesque of the real thing. He was tall, and thin, and pale. His face, indeed, was almost cadaverous, his figure so slim that on boisterous mornings the wind seemed to pass through it. In him the material seemed to have little place; he was evidently all music, and poetry, and love.

Happy Juliet! His eyes alone showed the consuming fire within, that sacrificial fire that is for ever alight at the altar of Venus, and is never likely to be extinguished for want of fuel until the sun loses his power and the earth goes back to the ice-age.

His eyes, then, were the windows of his soul; one might say the

barometers of his affection, that rose and fell according as the freaks of Juliet blew hot or cold, were tender or capricious. Those dark eyes could glow with fire or look softly impassioned in harmony with his moods and tenses.

His duties over for the morning—that is when eight o'clock struck—he would often join a lady that was evidently his Juliet, they would cross the gardens in mutual devotion, and their path was clearly strewn with roses. It is just as well that we should have these early experiences and lovely illusions to make up for the stern awakenings of after life.

But all this considered, why the conductor put so little sentiment into his programme was a matter hard to be understood. It seemed a contradiction to every other element in his life—excepting the uncompromising fact of forty pounds a year, which there was no getting over: and at last we came to the conclusion that with so much sentiment within him he could not stand the additional strain of the sentimental in music, but needed a counteracting quality to maintain the balance of his mind. He was polite and civil and obliging to the last degree: a man in love always is so, if he be worth anything at all, for he dwells in paradise, where no jarring element can enter: and occasionally when E. and Miss W. would go up together and request the favour of a certain piece—some special favourite of theirs—it always appeared in the next day's selection.

On such occasions he would address them with the greatest deference, as being members of the Angelic world, and would give them a series of German bows and dismiss the assembly of three with his hand upon his heart; all done in the most chivalrous manner that must have been gratifying to the angels—for who does not like to receive their due; or on the other hand, to see their rightful recognition and homage withheld?

This Tuesday morning, our *début* on the scene of action, the band played a selection of English, Scotch and Irish airs in honour of Miss O'Grady. During the quarter of an hour elapsing between two tumblers, we all stood and listened to the sweet melodies that succeeded each other. Miss O'Grady was visibly affected.

"What scenes they recall," she cried. "'Gin a body meet a body.' Ah! how often have I sung it, and with the proper expression, too—just a dash a roguishness in the eyes and voice, you know. There again—'My love is like the red, red rose'—where will you find a sweeter sentiment? And there goes 'Haste to the wedding.' I declare it's quite a consecutive story, a musical three volume novel. How good of them to give me this pleasure just before my departure. I shall often hear it in imagination."

Miss O'Grady's eyes were moist with tears: and presently when the orchestra glided into "Oh, wert thou in the cauld-blast," she visibly shivered.

"Is this the end of the three volume novel?" we asked.

"Oh, no," she replied; "this is a new departure. They have drifted into a melancholy key, and it doesn't suit me. It sends cold water down my back. Everything should be bright and cheerful and gay—*insouciant*, as the French say. It all helps one along the rugged road of life."

"Are your ghost stories and banshees a cheerful element?"

"That is quite another thing," she returned quickly. "Ghosts are stubborn facts, and if they come you must meet them. But they have their thrilling and exciting side also, and in that way are distinctly stimulating. You haven't heard a tenth part of my own personal experience in ghostland. I could tell you things that would



THE FLOWER-MARKET, AGAIN WITHOUT THE PATHETIC WOMAN.

make each particular hair to stand on end like the frightful porcupine, as Mrs. Malaprop says. By-the-bye, that good lady is credited with saying a good many things that never found their way into the pages of *The Rivals*."

"You have not yet given us the end of the fearful tale you began in the doctor's salon," we said. "The ghost that appeared in a white cotton night-cap, with snakes in his hair——"

"Quite wrong," interrupted Miss O'Grady sharply. "I beg you not to take liberties with my ghost, or improve upon the narrative. You are mixing him up with Medusa, and he had nothing to do with Medusa, who was a mere myth, still more insubstantial even than a

ghost. It was not snakes in his hair—how could he have when it was all hidden under a white cotton nightcap?—but a serpent that coiled itself round his white robe, rattled its bones, spit fire from——”

“Pray don’t go through that part of the performance over again,” we severely interrupted in our turn, “but tell us what happened next. The lady had just expired from terror——”

“A paralysis of terror,” cried Miss O’Grady with determined emphasis, “as the skeleton hand was stretched forth to clutch at her throat. Upon which a smell of sulphur and a blue flame——”

We were doomed to interruption. At this moment the British airs wound up in a grand crash of “God save the Queen;” English heads were bared, and ladies’ heads were bowed, and English tongues were silent.

Why is it that keenly as the anthem affects one in England, it seems to come home to one still more when heard on foreign soil? Is it that afar off we realise more vividly the blessings and privileges under which we live—the long and illustrious reign of a stainless monarch—such as no other country can claim?

Miss O’Grady stopped short in her ghost story, and again we saw the tears in her eyes as she bent them to the ground. When the anthem was over it was time to go back to the well for our second glass—and once more the conclusion of the ghost story was delayed.

Then we strayed to the other end of the garden where were the flower stalls, belonging to women who lived in the immediate neighbourhood, and brought them in every morning with their carts and barrows.

They cultivate these flowers in their gardens, and reap their little harvest during the season. Roses were in the ascendant, but they were by no means given away, fourpence and sixpence being the smallest price charged for a single bud, and no favour shown. There was no bargaining, as in many Continental places, and they preferred to trundle them back in their barrows in the afternoon rather than abate their demands. *Prix fixe* was their settled law.

In all but one case: a woman with an amiable and pathetic face, who would hold up a bunch of roses appealingly but shyly, as though she only did it under stern necessity. She was a wonderfully silent woman, and we could never get her to speak.

She seemed a woman unable to take her part, or defend herself; who would bear anything and go on bearing, and never turn against the hand of the oppressor. We wondered what sort of man she had for a husband—whether he was kind or cruel to her. She looked just the woman to die under the one treatment—endure and make no sign—and flourish and expand under the other.

If we asked her a question, she would look at us with a very gentle smile and expression, but very rarely was the shyness sufficiently conquered to admit a reply. If we took her bunch of roses, and gave her two-thirds of what she asked, she made no remonstrance, but with

the same gentle smile, the unbroken silence, would put the money into her pocket. All the other women asserted their rights and their prices, civilly enough, but with Medean obstinacy.

The consequence was that day after day many of the flowers were not sold and had to be taken home again. It seemed bad policy; everyone grumbled; and comparatively few bought.

Thus when the *Fräulein* of the golden harp was presented with a bouquet of roses, it was no insignificant offering, but a token of sincere admiration. Many people presented one single rose to each other, and it was gratefully accepted.

The sellers had not the slightest idea of arranging flowers, or taste in doing so, and this took very much from their charm. We could not help thinking often of our days in Valencia and the contrast of its flower market; where for a few sous they would give us more roses than we could carry away with both hands, and throw in a handful of sweet verbena into the bargain. There for a small sum one's rooms were decked as for a marriage feast, and one lived in a perfumed atmosphere.

It was very different at Kissingen, but the women possibly knew their own business best, and did not believe in the system of small profits and quick returns.

Their stalls formed the prettiest part of the Kurgarten, and for background they had the flower beds and fountains immediately in front of the Kursaal. One or two customers bought in profusion: one young man especially day after day loading his hands and arms for the benefit of some favoured lady. We felt sure that he was the accepted lover of a very pretty girl, to whom he was particularly attentive, and who was never without a bouquet, whilst a mixed profusion was despatched to her hotel. But by and by he was discovered equally attentive to another very pretty girl, who was also loaded with flowers; and we came to the conclusion that like many of the sons of Adam, since the closing of the gates of Eden, he was fickle and false.

Opposite the flower stalls was another very important colony of commerce; no less than the fancy bread stalls. The bread was called Bismarck bread, because Bismarck was said to have been specially fond of it, and to have done much to make it popular. The great chancellor had once lived near Kissingen, and his house is proudly pointed out by the coachmen as they drive past it. Yet Bismarck is not popular in Bavaria: perhaps less so there than anywhere else: and with good reason; for none of the lesser countries or principalities have suffered more at his hands. But Bismarck, like Napoleon, never thought of others in carrying out his plans and wishes. He was equally unscrupulous in all his ways; and neither bloodshed nor the righteous laws of *meum* and *tuum* restrained him in carrying out ideas. So, in spite of all, the bread is called Bismarck bread; and no one eats the less—any more than anyone buys a travelling-bag the less because it is called Gladstone.

Everyone bought the bread. It was considered the proper thing to take with one's breakfast, and consisted of dough baked to the consistency of biscuit—brown and crisp. It went very well with one's coffee, especially as no butter was allowed during the "Kissingen course"—a rule we honoured more in the breach than the observance, whenever we could obtain E.'s consent to the infraction by a bribe of roses or the promise of a pearl necklace.

Everyone bought the bread—which was often half a yard long, though thin and light as a feather: and between 7.30 and 8 o'clock, everyone might be seen homeward bound, carrying a white paper bag.

The hotels did not and would not supply the bread, which might very becomingly have taken the place in their menu of the forbidden butter. There was no exception to the rule, even in favour of Royalty, that bought its bread just as naturally as it drank the waters, and did not condescend to do it by deputy.

On wet days flowers and bread took up their standing under shelter of the long glass corridor or colonnade that formed part of the Kursaal building—the *Conversationsaal*, as it is called; and where, at midday, the scene changed.

Small tables were brought out, and the corridor became a restaurant, patronised by people who lived in rooms during their treatment and wisely eschewed the hotels with their abominable food.

The head waiter who had been there for generations and was supposed to be as old as Methuselah, was distinctly the patriarch and most popular character of the place. We called him the Ogre, but if he devoured people it was from amiability. In spite of his age he looked almost as young as his sons, who were so many satellites moving in his orbit. His activity was prodigious in spite of a rotundity which suggested a course of the waters with advantage. But a prophet has no honour in his own country, and the Ogre very much preferred a course of beer—not limited to weeks or months.

For Miss Sutherland, who was an old habituée, he entertained a profound regard; a silent admiration that was nothing less than the worship of a divinity. He would look at her as we look at Sirius afar off, blazing in a frosty sky, and silently watch the beauty of her scintillations, vaguely wondering at all the mystery that lies beyond our ken.

At five o'clock Miss Sutherland would appear as regularly as the hour struck and the band commenced its afternoon selection and order coffee and Zwiebach: and until the order was duly executed, though fifty people claimed his attention, it was as though they talked to the wind. The Ogre would bring her the hottest and clearest coffee, and a Benjamin's supply of cake, and would hover about the table and see that all was right, with reverential bows that he kept specially for Royalty: all the while regarding his divinity with

a dumb, appealing, pathetic look such as a dog bestows upon its master for whom the sacrifice of life itself would be a trifling consideration. The least grateful recognition on the part of Miss Sutherland: thanks for the boiling coffee or a request for more sugar: was far more to him than decoration to a soldier for bravery; he lived in paradise until the next twenty-four hours brought back a repetition of scene and circumstance.

"I am quite jealous," said Miss O'Grady. "In vain have I tried in all ways to divert a little of that worship on to my own head—I might as well imitate Mrs. Partington and try to sweep back the sea with a broom. But every man to his last; chacun à son métier; I



THE MARKET-PLACE.

reign under other conditions. In ghostland, for instance, I am unrivalled; in ghost-lore I have no equal; and for thrilling manner and creepy effect in telling a ghost story you must confess that I am *hors concours*. Miss Sutherland could never equal me in that department.—Do look at that enormous woman in black gliding about with a shawl upon her head. She looks almost like a ghost herself."

Miss O'Grady in saying this, motioned to a very singular-looking being: and as we watched her day after day, she only grew more singular and mysterious.

She was a woman (if woman she was and not a ghost) of some

sixty summers, or rather winters, to judge from her present appearance. We watched her morning after morning with ever-increasing interest and perplexity. She was enormously tall, and seemed to tower a head and shoulders above all other women, and above most men. She was by no means fragile in frame but almost masculine, and must once have possessed great strength. Always dressed in severe black, the effect of her appearance was heightened by a black shawl thrown over her head in place of hat or bonnet, which served to bring out still more forcibly the ghastly pallor of her immovable face. We never once saw a change of expression upon it: never a smile or a frown; never the lips parted for a moment: never the smallest indication that a soul dwelt behind those pale grey eyes.

And yet there was some sign of an indwelling soul in the look of mute suffering that characterised the whole expression of the face, the whole pose of the figure. And the suffering seemed to be, or to have been—for somehow, whatever it was, one felt instinctively it was of the past—psychological rather than material; or, to descend to commonplace terms, rather mental than physical.

She looked like a woman that had once gone through a frightful shock which had turned her hair grey and her face white in a moment and left her petrified yet living. Had she been young and beautiful she might have stood for Galatea at the supreme moment before awakening to life and consciousness at the touch of Pygmalion. She was upright as a dragoon—and indeed would have looked well at the head of an army, capable of commanding and certain of being obeyed.

We never observed that she drank the waters; perhaps she took the baths, though we could never imagine her other than as we saw her: never imagine her eating or sleeping or unrobing, or doing anything but wander to and fro night and day like a restless and troubled spirit.

She did not appear to walk, but moved about with a peculiar gliding motion that was not ungraceful but was very distinctly uncanny. Always alone, we never saw her once address a fellow-creature; her eyes never seemed to rest upon anyone; she moved about as though totally unconscious of the crowd that surrounded her, or that she was not the only being left on earth. Her appearance never varied; she was faultlessly neat; not a hair out of place, not a fold of her dress awry, never the slightest change in the pose of her shawl. All, like herself, might have been carved in stone.

As far as one could tell, she seemed to be susceptible to the charms of music, for she would especially haunt the orchestra, and wander round and round with her strange gliding movement; and every now and then, when any certain air or passage seemed to strike her, would stay her gliding, and with head well up, and eyes fixed on vacancy would seem to be solving some problem of the stars, or to be contemplating some celestial vision invisible to ordinary mortals.

Had she been younger, more human, less statuesque, we might have thought her in love with the soloist who put so much charm

into *Du bist die Ruh'* ; or with the pale, slight conductor who conjured so much music out of his bâton, and who, when he put it down and took up his violin—on the rarest occasions—transported one to a paradise of melody. As it was, all such thoughts and surmisings were out of the question. You cannot associate warmth with an iceberg, or frivolity with a hermit. Haunt the orchestra as she might, pause at the most striking passages and listen to the sweetest sounds, her marble face never changed by so much as the quivering of an eyelid or the trembling of a lip.

And then one morning a strange thing happened ; she ceased to



THE RIVER SAALE.

be alone ; a new element of mystery was added to the quiet drama : a drama of dumb-motions and tableaux-vivants. We thought the skies would fall, but they did not.

One morning this strange apparition appeared with another apparition at her side ; more ghostlike, more remarkable even than herself, if that were possible.

This time it was a man, but such a man as we had never seen in the flesh, clothed and walking. He was an absolute skeleton ; tall, dressed in black, his face white, his hair long and grey, his eyes deep sunken and glittering with a strange fire that seemed to be consuming him.

We had never seen anyone so frail. He was tall, but stooping ; she by his side looked almost powerful and amazonian. They were nearly the same height, and formed a strange and wonderful pair. Still the same mysterious silence was observed. We never saw them once open their lips or address a remark to each other. It may be that they were in advance of the world and communicated their thoughts without the aid of language.

But they were not by any means inseparable. He generally sat upon one of the benches, quiet and immovable, looking almost like an empty suit of black clothes that would collapse at the smallest breath of wind, whilst she glided in and out of the crowd or haunted the orchestra. Now and then she would go up to him and stand beside him, but no word was spoken.

There was a great similarity between them ; not physically, but a mental or spiritual likeness, evidently brought about by long living together, or being together brought into conduct with a strange, revolutionary chain of events. Both seemed to have gone through unutterable sorrow ; to have experienced some vast shock which had transformed them as an earthquake transforms the face of nature. They would often be almost the last to leave the "field of battle," and we would watch them cross the gardens side by side, pursuing their silent, mysterious way. No paper bag of Bismarck bread was ever seen in their hands ; they seemed above the ordinary needs of human nature.

It was to this singular apparition that Miss O'Grady had drawn our attention that first Tuesday : the woman : the man only appeared upon the scene long after she had reluctantly torn herself away from the charms of Kissingen.

"What can she be ?" we asked, as Miss O'Grady put another lump of sugar into her coffee and helped herself to a Zwiebach. The Ogre was looking reverentially at Miss Sutherland, from a distance of six yards, his napkin under his arm and his hands folded devotionally. The apparition was moving about with her gliding step, her pale motionless face surrounded by the shawl thrown over her head.

Not least strange was the fact that she attracted no notice from the crowd. For any attention she received she might have been invisible to all mortal eyes but our own. Perhaps they had grown accustomed to seeing her year after year, and the singularity of her appearance had worn off.

And indeed in the matter of costume she almost had the advantage, for nothing could exceed the ugliness, the want of grace and taste that severely characterised the dress of the German women. Nature has not been kindly to them. They are fashioned in an ungraceful mould, full of *gauche* angularities, and these outward features evidently extend to the brain. They may have admirable mental and moral qualities, make good housewives, prove treasures to their equally ill-favoured husbands, who may look upon them as angels without

wings (though the women take a very secondary place in Germany, and no man dreams of making way for his wife or giving her precedence over himself), but the painful angularity showing through all is ever there.

"What can she possibly be?" we asked, as Miss O'Grady motioned towards the apparition. "Do you think she is one of your ghosts? Is she the unfortunate creature who died of a paralysis of terror come to life again in order to haunt the world and in her turn strike terror upon mankind?"

"No," replied Miss O'Grady, eyeing us with some suspicion; "that poor creature never came to life again, but lies buried in the churchyard of Ballinahoolish. No; that singular apparition is no ghost; I have watched her now for many days. She is far too substantial to be anything but a material body. But I have my theory. She appears to me to be haunted. She is pursued by a vampire, or haunted by a ghost. Did you ever read *Green Tea*? Is it not beautifully horrible? Well, this woman is something of that sort. A ghoul or vampire pursues her, and she can never get away from it. Or it may be even an ordinary ghost, that appears to her at midnight, the effects of which she cannot shake off by day. I should much like to have a conversation with her; she is a woman of strange spiritual experiences; of that I am convinced; and she must have a whole storehouse of ghostly lore reposing behind those queer grey eyes of hers. At first I thought she was a woman who had gone through some awful shock; such as a shipwreck, for instance, in which husband and children were drowned and she alone was saved; or a fire, in which husband and children were burnt and she alone escaped; or a sudden financial crash in which she was reduced from enormous wealth to abject poverty. But having studied her I am convinced there are deeper depths even than these, in her case. The ghostly element comes in; the supernatural, in the shape of a ghoul or vampire. I would give anything to talk to her, but she never opens her lips; never speaks to a soul; I sometimes think some awful fright had deprived her of the power of speech. A ghoul or vampire would be quite enough to do that."

Here the apparition glided out of sight behind the orchestra, which at that moment was redeeming some of its frivolous dance tunes by a selection from Weber. It would on rare occasions give us selections from Wagner, especially the *Walkürenritt*—almost the most realistic piece of music ever composed; but for Wagner it was hardly strong enough in the open air.

The Apparition went out of sight, and Miss O'Grady, putting the last lump of sugar into her coffee, made signs to the Ogre for more. She might as well have signed to the Apparition or to one of the marble statues amongst the flower beds. He never moved.

"If I could only master sufficient German," she said, "I would treat that man to my most horrible ghost story—a perfectly true one

all the same—and so petrify him with fright that his hair would rise up on end and never come down again.”

We tried our powers of persuasion, with equal failure, and were just rising to drag him to the table by the said hair of the head, when one of his satellites passed and supplied the sugar basin. The Ogre disappeared. The band went on playing. When it was over we moved away for a brisk walk before supper.

“You will often come here for your coffee after we have gone,” said Miss Sutherland. “It is pleasant to sit in the Colonnade and bring one’s work or one’s book, or do nothing but study the people, whilst listening to the band. I have told the Ogre he is to pay you every attention after we have left. He is a worthy old man.”

As it chanced we never again did take coffee in the colonnade, but whenever we chanced to pass the Ogre, at mid-day or in the afternoon, he would greet us with a sad smile of remonstrance and a “*Die Herrschaften kommt nicht mehr?*” A touching appeal that made us feel guilty of neglect, and almost traitors to Miss Sutherland’s good intentions.

Our walk that Tuesday afternoon took us beside the banks of the little Saale, a quiet stream that waters the pleasant valley in which Kissingen reposes.

The town lies in a hollow, and in hot summer weather the air is relaxing, and the river, if its waters fail, becomes unwholesome. Hills surround the town, forming charming walks and drives; afternoon excursions for coffee-drinking in the intervals between dinner and supper.

These excursions are numberless, and add much to the pleasure of one’s stay at Kissingen. You leave the close town, and after half an hour’s delightful walk through green fields or shady woods, find yourself far up a hill where the air is delightfully fresh, and where in a quiet arbour they bring you coffee and cake. There is a feeling of rest and repose about it that is very soothing and refreshing. The hill-side air invigorates the frame, somewhat depressed by the after influence of the baths. Even after champagne there comes reaction. You sit and enjoy the magnificent scene stretched out before you. The town down in the hollow; where in the distance you see the pleasant-looking *Hôtel de Russie* flying its flag.

A small group of brown roofs shows you where the village stood that was once all of Kissingen: a village now grown to a town with its 12,000 or more annual visitors. You trace the Kurgarten with its Conversationsaal, and its encircling park.

The band is playing and its strains faintly and pleasantly reach you through the still, clear air. If it is only a frivolous polka, you close your ears; the popular audience below will applaud sufficiently; the irritating strains will not waste their sweetness in vain. But if it happens to be the soloist playing *Du bist die Ruh’*, or *Am Meer*, or *Im Walde*, you strain your hearing to the uttermost. Clear and soft

come the notes of the cornet in the hands of the player. It is almost more beautiful and dreamy from the distance it has to travel before it reaches you on the hillside. The atmosphere is so rarefied that every shade of expression is caught. Yet we are so far off that the people walking to and fro in the alleys of the Kurgarten look like small children. We see them struggling up to the wells for their glass of Rakoczy, or Pandur, or Whey, but all that is lost up here; we can only guess at what they are doing because we happen to know.

Beyond the town rise other hills, full of luxuriant beauty; clothed with trees, where other excursions may be made to other cafés: and



IN THE KURGARTEN.

where other visitors are looking across the valley upon us, just as we are looking upon them.

It was the charm of these excursions which won our allegiance from the Conversationsaal and the Ogre. The walk was good for one, and formed a break in the day: and there was the mild excitement of deciding on the particular walk to be taken, the special café to be patronized.

But to-day our walk lay beside the river bank, and the stream was small but picturesque.

To our left, standing well back from the Avenue, were the various hotels "of the second order," as people said, and well built imposing

houses given over to flats and rooms. To our right flowed the river. Three swans disported themselves on the surface, and were travellers, for their nests were a long way up the river, near where the boats started for the *Salinen*. The father and mother were not model parents, for if their grown-up child approached too near to them they chased him with pecks and hisses.

At the end of the pleasant avenue, in ground apparently unconsecrated, were one or two graves in which quietly rested, after "life's fitful fever," the bodies of one or two brave Bavarians who fell in the fight of '66 between the Prussian corps of Göben and Prince Karl. They were exciting times, and Kissingen came in for its share. In the Kurplatz there was a pitched battle, in which many were killed. The villagers all fled, and only the English and Americans remained in the place. And when all was over and the villagers returned to their deserted homes, it was to find their stones red with the blood of the slain, and their ranks terribly thinned. In many and many a house there was a weeping Rachel who would not be comforted, because her children were not. But that was a generation ago, and many of the Rachels have joined the sons for whom they wept, whilst for those who still remain time has brought its healing. No one seemed to know just why these one or two men had been buried there, apart from the others who had fallen, and only a yard or so from a public and much frequented thoroughfare. They formed one of Miss Sutherland's favourite pilgrimages, for she belongs to the few who do not allow the excitements of to-day and the anticipations of to-morrow to blot out the remembrances of yesterday.

"I like to pay them a quiet visit," she said, "and put a flower on the graves. Pray give them one of yours," she added to E., who was carrying a bouquet of lilies of the valley. "Such devotion to one's country ought never to be forgotten. I always like to come here and find that someone else has laid a flower upon the graves. The poor Bavarians! How they suffered in '66. How many went out—how few returned. Placed in the fronts to be shot down one after another, their destruction was wholesale, and the land went into mourning. But all that is now matter of history. All the more reason for decorating these poor fellows' graves with flowers."

"Ah!" said Miss O'Grady, mournfully reading the records, "nothing is sadder than that Tibni dies and Omri reigns. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi*. No sooner gone than we are forgotten. Others take our place and the world rolls on. There may be a Walhalla of History, but who ever mentally opens the book of the dead, and reads its records?"

So small offerings were left on the quiet graves, and we turned into the fields on the other side the river, one of the pleasantest little walks round about.

The air was full of sweet scents; the scene was suggestive of

repose at the going down of the sun : going down behind the hills, and so for us virtually setting, and filling the sky with gorgeous colours, and gold and crimson streaks of feathery cloud.

In the near distance the trees of the park stood out in all their beauty against the sky, gaining in mystery as the hour of gloaming drew on, and they grew full of their weird whisperings. It was very pleasant to wander about the quiet almost deserted avenues, where the trees arched overhead, and the long slanting shadows disappeared too soon as the sun dipped behind the hills.

Close by was the villa that only a week or so before our arrival had



KISSINGEN.

been inhabited by the unhappy Empress of Austria, whom even then the unseen wings of Death were overshadowing.

Here, too, she would walk about alone, in her fearless independence, and almost incessantly. At morning, at noonday, and at evening, her fragile, graceful figure might be seen wandering about the park avenues with a quick step, or up the more distant hillsides, or penetrating into the country villages, where she would stay and speak to the children in the roads, or the cottagers at the doors, with all that grace and charm and kindly interest in human nature that was a part of her very being. She marked out her own ways in life, but it is doubtful if a single unkindly word or harsh thought ever

crossed her lips or entered her heart. And surely Heaven was merciful and protected her even in Death: for she died without pain, not knowing what had happened: her passage through the Dark Valley only a falling asleep.

The villagers and children surrounding Kissingen knew not who she was, but all felt the influence of the beautiful face and kindly eyes, both so marked by the care and sorrow of a very eventful and troubled life.

We passed from the fields into the quiet avenues, haunted no longer by the graceful, quick-moving figure that had gone on her way and was surely moving towards the one great climax.

And out of one of the avenues there issued the remarkable form of her Excellency. She seems fated to appear at the end of a paper instead of at the beginning, but we cannot always control events. We soon found that she was nearly always alone, and often looked lonely, but in spite of her years she was a woman of great courage.

"I travelled quite alone all the way from Russia," she said to us one day, "without even a maid to look after me. But I like to be perfectly free and independent, even at my advanced age. I was so weak that I could hardly get into the train; but I felt that if I did not come to Kissingen and take the waters, I should die."

She only arrived when we did, and so that Tuesday evening when she issued out of the park avenue, the weakness was only too apparent. She walked with a slow step. Her face was pale, amiable, and somewhat suffering, very refined, and lighted up with large kindly dark eyes. She invariably dressed in black: a peculiar poke-bonnet of a past fashion, and in a long voluminous silk cloak that reached to her feet and was made almost in the manner of a sacque of the last century: a dress that added dignity to her already dignified appearance.

There was something about her that immediately and strongly attracted one's sympathies.

"I long to go up and speak to her," said E., "and to offer to be of any use to her. Her rooms are exactly opposite mine, in that corner house, and I don't believe she has even a maid to attend upon her. I think I must call and offer her my friendly services."

"And if I were not going away I would come with you," said Miss O'Grady. "There is a great deal of soul in her face: something very lovable in her expression. I think too she would be impressionable, and would appreciate my ghost stories. It is so delightful to get an appreciative audience about you. The air seems charged with electricity and all sorts of supernatural agencies. I have often felt ghosts about me and seen their shadowy forms, when nobody else has seen them. It is not given to everyone to see beyond the material world, you know."

Her Excellency was quietly and gently moving down the avenue, and presently, close to the bridge, we met face to face. Her beautiful dark eyes looked gravely and rather sadly at us, a look of

patient suffering in them: the suffering of weakness no doubt, for, as we have said, she had not yet recovered from the effects of her long journey: that uninterrupted journey from St. Petersburg, which seems interminable.

The swans were on the river, very near the bridge, and for once the old birds were not hen-pecking the young one. But when we threw them bread and biscuit nothing fell to the share of the child without great manoeuvring on the part of the throwers.

As we looked, a clumsy boat with two men in it came swiftly along for the purpose of chasing the birds back to their nests: an unnecessary precaution no doubt. The splendid evening had tempted them beyond their hour, but all birds and animals might safely be left far more to their instinct than they are. They know much more than we generally give them credit for, and what they are about.

To-night they evidently knew what the boat meant, and flew before it with wings outspread and necks craned, half in, half out of the water. When the chase was over, and pursuers and pursued had disappeared round a bend of the river—a shrill protest from the swans every now and then coming up the water: swans have not graceful voices, however graceful they may look gliding about their native element—when all had disappeared, and the ruffled surface of the river had stilled down again to peace and quietness, we looked up to find that her Excellency had disappeared. Her house was only two steps from the bridge, and by this time she was no doubt reposing in her room.

"The place looks quite deserted without her," said Miss O'Grady, glancing up and down the various avenues. "When we are gone I am sure you will know her and find her charming—she is so far removed from the commonplace element. Dear me!"—placing her hand in her pocket and drawing out a letter to be registered: "I had quite forgotten! This ought to go to-night if possible."

"Then there is nothing for it but to go to the chief office," said Miss Sutherland; "but I fear you may be too late."

So we all crossed the bridge, and, turning to the left, passed down the now utterly deserted Kurgarten: a startling contrast to the scene of only an hour ago. Going through one of the gates, we passed the Kurhaus Hotel, whose corner rooms were occupied by Princess Henry of Battenberg, lovely flowers decorating the balcony. Beyond this we soon came to the quaint market-place, which in its gabled houses retains a suspicion of ancient times, and may almost be described as picturesque. The post-office stood out in the square, best and most conspicuous of all the houses, with its old-fashioned but partly-renewed façade, its gabled roofs and clock tower.

Here, morning after morning, the women kept their fruit-stalls, sitting under enormous umbrellas. Rich ripe cherries and grapes and other fruits tempted one sorely to throw dignity to the winds and invest in cherries and a cabbage-leaf, and boldly eat them in

public, whilst playing at sentinel: but somehow, after schoolboy days, one seldom gives way to the temptation. We have grown self-conscious; more reserved and less impulsive; the time has come when we say "Noblesse oblige"; and if we were caught eating cherries off a cabbage-leaf in public, we should blush and feel guilty of a crime. It is all a mistake of course, but that makes no difference.

This evening the stalls were gone; the women had folded their huge umbrellas and departed; there was no temptation to assail us. And the post-office was still open, and Miss O'Grady was in time.

Some people always are in time; others are always just five minutes too late. Miss O'Grady would have said it lay in the stars, and their combination at the time of one's birth. The science, at any rate, is old enough—like palmistry—and has come down to us from the ancients, who were learned in reading the skies. It may have become more or less a dead science, but of its fascination there can be no doubt. All other means of foretelling the future sink into insignificance beside it. The brooding darkness, the grandeur of the skies, suggestive of what they are—illimitable space—the splendour of the moving stars and constellations, the distance which separates them from us, the weird, mysterious silence that is never broken—the eternal silence of space—the longing for a sign, which from age to age never comes—everything contributes to plead excuse for the belief in astrology, whether it be true, or whether it be delusion.

We left the old market square, where flourishes the shop that sells the Bismarck bread—the owner must be fast growing into a millionaire—and wended our quiet way back to the Hôtel de Russie, and our frugal supper, which was not at all *Kurgemäss*.

After supper we sat in a corner of the hall, and contemplated the unfinished lift that hung in the centre, suspended like a birdcage, and looking almost as frail, and listened to some of the musicians, who on "off nights" at the theatre separated into three detachments, and played at the three principal hotels. Verily there was no rest for them. But at least we hoped the three hosts gave them all a good supper and a plentiful supply of beer and Rhine wine, of which all looked more or less in need.

And Miss O'Grady gave us a whole string of ghost stories in weird whispers—every one of them personal experiences, and most of them having taken place in Ireland—which made our flesh creep and haunted our dreams for many a long night after. Then, when the clock struck ten, mindful of early risings we broke up the assembly, and all the way up the three flights of stairs, and down the long corridor, we looked over our shoulder to see if, like Miss Kielmansegge, our shadow was double, and ghosts were following us. In her case, alas, it was something much worse than a ghost.

There was no ghostly atmosphere in the brilliant morning that

greeted our eyes on first awakening. A flood of light filled the room, and sunshine filled the sky.

"You will not see us off," said Miss O'Grady emphatically, as we met at the wells—she for a farewell draught. "You will not see us off. If you do, we shall never meet again. That is as sure as the recurrence of light and darkness, the roundness of the earth, the appearance of ghosts, or any other indisputable fact."

But we would not accept the superstition, and eleven o'clock found us all on the platform waiting the signal for departure. The two ladies were comfortably settled in their carriage, and would journey as far as Cologne, where they proposed spending a couple of days. About Miss O'Grady's eyes there was a suspicion of redness.

"I never in my life was so sorry to leave any place," she said, looking down from her superior height upon us on the platform—more often than not, one can only climb into the German carriages by a perfect *tour de force*, not at all graceful for ladies. "It is all I can do to tear myself away."

And her experience was by no means singular in this. Kissingen does enter into one's affections and retains a hold upon them.

The guard gave the signal, the horn blew, the whistle shrieked; there were last hasty good-byes and hand-shakes, and the heavily built, clumsy carriages rolled away from the platform. Miss O'Grady hoisted a pocket handkerchief from the end of her umbrella—on which we seemed to see GHOSTLAND written in fiery letters—and waved frantically; then all disappeared in the distance, and there was nothing but the trail of steam floating upwards into the skies to show what had been. We turned back into the town, and for the moment its streets felt very quiet and deserted.

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## DEAD SEA FRUIT.

BY LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE.

## CHAPTER V.

AT the base of the Fiesole Hill, starting from far-away rocky valleys, runs the little river Mugnone. Sometimes it rushes down, a yellow seething torrent, flinging itself impetuously into the great Arno; but during the summer months half its bed is dry; a stony rough watercourse; and the narrow stream, which never fails, is invaluable to women and girls who gather there in troops to wash.

The morning was still young and very clear and blue, when Nanna Zei, the peasant girl whom Gian Martino had called his *promessa*, came down to the river to carry on her humble trade. She looked very pretty in her dark olive-green gown and large apron, a scarlet handkerchief knotted round her thick curly black hair.

Nanna knelt down and her shapely brown arms set to work, the bang, bang of the wooden "mat" beating the clothes with a cheerful regularity.

Nanna was first at the river to-day, and she had secured the choicest spot where the water ran clear and deep and there was a dry bed of sand on which to kneel.

Early as it was, she was to be interrupted.

The high road, hedged by a low stone wall, passed above the bed of the Mugnone on a slope, ten or twelve feet high, of shelving stones and grass.

Somebody whistled from the high road, and Nanna recognising the summons looked up brightly and blushed a rosy red.

Gian Martino sat on the parapet. It was very early, but generally he was hard at work earlier still, so she was astonished.

"How is this, Gian?" she exclaimed. "Not at work to-day?"

"Nanna," he answered gravely, "come up here, I want to speak to you."

She glanced doubtfully at her work.

"You must not keep me long," she said. "See, I have much to do."

She rose, shook the water from her hands, and climbed up the bank. She seated herself sideways on the low wall and looked up into his face.

"You look pale, Gian," she said. "Are you ill? What is it then?"

"I am not ill, dear, but I have a great anxiety. I am puzzled and unhappy."

"Poor Gian! but have you spoken to the Priore? He would advise you."

"The Priore is an ignorant old peasant!"

Nanna drew herself back with a movement of horrified dismay, and he pulled himself up.

"*Che, che!* a priest is a priest all the same, and he is a good one. But, Nanna, this is not a question a priest could settle."

"Then it must be wrong," said Nanna firmly. "Put it out of your mind, Gian."

"Listen, child," he said impatiently. "I have had an offer made me; an offer of employment at so much a year."

Nanna clasped her hands.

"Madonna be praised!" she exclaimed. "Surely she has heard my prayer at last!"

"Madonna has little enough to do with this bargain," muttered Gian. He went on aloud: "The offer is a very good one, Nanna. The income is ten thousand francs a year."

"Maria Santissima!" exclaimed the girl.

"It is a large income, Nanna, and the work I should have to do would be after my own heart—to be a sculptor's assistant."

"And you hesitate?"

"Can you keep a secret, Nanna?"

She clasped her hands.

"I will try."

"No, no; that is not enough. You must say these words after me: 'If I betray the secret confided to me by my *promesso*, may Madonna and all the blessed saints refuse to hear my prayers evermore.'"

"Gian, Gian, I cannot!"

"So be it. Then I will not trust you."

Nanna burst into tears. He was tormenting her beyond her strength. How could she invoke this terrible curse on herself when she knew quite well that she could not keep a secret? She must tell her mother, she must tell the Priore.

Gian sat silent while her tears lasted, he was debating within himself. The relief of telling her about the offer that had been made to him was not worth the risk of letting her into the secret. In a moment of time her real character stood revealed to him as it had never been before. She was very pretty, and good, and sweet, a charming creature to make a pet of, but he would never be safe with her; if his path were to be a crooked one, there could be no greater danger than her stupidity. The pretty crying girl at his side he believed to be essentially stupid.

Gian wiped his hot brow. The wish to accept Giglio's offer was becoming insurmountable. He would give Nanna no chance of trying to dissuade him.

"Come, come, my child," he said suddenly. "This crying is foolish. I will put no responsibility on your head. Dry your eyes."

She obeyed, looking up at him wistfully.

"I was silly," she said, "but it is all over. I do not wish to know your secret, Gian, and when you bring me such good news I ought not to cry. Ten thousand francs!—but it is a dream."

"It is a reality," said Gian.

"And must you work very hard—too hard, Gian? You are not strong. It might be too dearly bought."

"It might be too dearly bought," he repeated dreamily, then raising himself. "No, Nanna, the work will not be too hard. It will be the best work that I have ever done, and yet—and yet it will be dearly bought."

Nanna looked startled.

"Gian," she said quickly, "what is it?"

"Do not trouble your little head. It is enough that I tell you I must leave you."

"Leave me? Go away?"

"Only as far as Florence at first; afterwards——"

"Gian, it can be for no good! Why should you go away? You make fifteen francs a week at the wood-yard, and I—look how I am getting on! Do not go, Gian. I also have put by something; in another year we could be married, and I could look after your mother."

Gian turned his face away. The life she set before him so eagerly, the small house, the narrow income, the promised society of the two women who loved him best, all seemed to him mean, sordid, poor. Before his dazzled eyes floated a vision of achievement, attainable amusement, power, a wealth which seemed to him immense.

He rose to his feet restlessly.

"It cannot be, Nanna," he said. "I must go. The old life has become hateful to me."

Her head drooped sorrowfully.

"And I," she murmured, "I am part of the old life."

Gian sat down again and began eagerly to talk to her of the value of wealth, of the possibilities it held out, of the intellectual and artistic advantages of a town life. His eyes were bright and feverish.

Nanna was stupid, but women have intuitions which are very true.

"You say the old life is no longer possible," she said dully; and he thought within himself impatiently that she had not listened to one word of his explanation.

"You do not know what such a chance is to a man," he exclaimed. "Women never understand."

"No, Gian, I do not think that they do understand," she said meekly.

Her throat was throbbing, her eyes burning with hot tears. The whole charm of the old life came before her; its little pleasures, the

delicious repose after work, the walks with her lover on Sunday afternoons, the going to mass together, she in her best gown and the little silk shawl that her mother wore on her wedding-day. Those exquisite Sundays and Saints' Days, on which they would count up their gains and put aside the *soldi* that could be spared for their savings box.

"Oh, is it not enough?" she exclaimed, throwing out her hands. "Have we not been happy?"

Gian shrugged his shoulders, and began his long explanation again. He told her that she called it happiness because she knew no better, but happiness was not the main object of life—progress was far more important, and progress entailed sacrifice, while ultimate success could only be won that way. Nanna did not understand, nor did she care for ultimate success, so his words made no impression except of the finality of his decision.

"When do you go?" she faltered, and then the tears burst forth again.

"On this day week," he answered. "So Nanna, it is too soon for tears."

She checked her sobs, her work must be done, and the sound of chattering voices awoke her to the reality of the present moment.

"That is Carola's voice," she exclaimed, "and she has taken my place, and is throwing aside my things. Good-bye, Gian, I must fly."

And she dashed down the bank again to her place on the river.

Gian looked down after her with a frown on his face.

"*Per Bacco!*" he exclaimed. "She must be educated! A wife without education would be as sand between one's teeth."

Meanwhile the voices below grew shrill.

"Dare to take my place! Bad girl, see, there go thy aprons!" and souse went a bundle into the water.

"But thou wast absent, evil cat! It is our rule, the place is mine!"

"And I tell thee that sooner than let thee steal my place I will hold thy head under water!"

"Cat!"

## CHAPTER VI.

"YOUR work is mine! I have bought your work with wages as a man buys the service of his lacquey, and, by Heaven, you shall obey me."

The scene was three years later in a splendid studio in London, and the two men who had entered into partnership were standing together confronting each other.

The studio was very large, decorated with casts and models, cartoons, studies in clay, plaster and marble. The light was perfect; all the artist could desire was there to promote work and to aid inspiration.

In the centre of the room on a revolving platform stood the exquisite statue just finished, with the fame of which all England was ringing. In front of it stood Giglio Santeodoro, while Gian Martino balanced himself on a marble balustrade of Greek design and execution.

Three years had had a marked effect on the two men. Both were more altered than the passing of three short summers and three dark winters would warrant.

Giglio's large eyes had grown fierce and combative. His mouth had a nervous twitch, and he was very thin; so thin that all the gentleness of youth had disappeared.

Gian Martino had improved, the fire of genius lit up the irregular features. The exercise of that genius had widened his life, so that the contracted interests, the peasant's anxious penuriousness, had dropped from him; his face had narrowed and refined. The projecting mouth, the prominent eyes, were curiously intense, unsmiling and grave. The clever hands were long, supple and sinuous as they worked, when idle, opening and shutting and modelling as if they were never out of the clay. And to this man Santeodoro was saying, in a tone of fierce harshness—

"I have bought your work as a man buys the service of his lacquey!"

"You have bought my work," said Gian between his teeth; "but, by Heaven, a man buys a horse and he brings him to the river, but he cannot make him drink."

"But my credit is at stake," cried Giglio, pacing up and down the room. "I have undertaken to execute an order and it must be done."

"Then do it yourself."

Giglio turned upon him with a flash of rage.

"You dare say that?"

Gian only shrugged his shoulders.

Giglio stood mute for a moment struggling with his pride. He knew that he had only to change his tactics, he knew that, during the long exile he and his companion had shared, Gian had grown to love him in spite of much neglect and even unkindness on his part. For Giglio felt at times all the invincible irritability of his false position and would speak fiercely, but he had learnt to conquer himself, and after awhile he spoke gently.

"Gian, my friend," he said, "for Heaven's sake be reasonable! Why do you object to this subject? You may treat it as you like. I stipulated that the treatment should be left to me. You have never read Shakespeare! You do not know! This Portia of theirs is to these English what our Beatrice is to us! The dress——"

"The gown of a lawyer!" said Gian, almost in distress. "What can I make of it?—and worse still, he exacts a lawyer's biretta! I will not do it!"

"Gian, my dear friend, true genius overcomes difficulties and is

not daunted by them. You will do it for my sake? My honour is involved—and her face may be beautiful.”

“The biretta.”

“She shall hold it in her hand. Come, that is a compromise. Hark, there is the bell!”

Gian rolled off his seat and went to open the studio door. In one moment he assumed the *rôle* he undertook before the public—that of the great sculptor’s humble assistant.

A group of people poured in. A merry party assembled round Lady Blanche Owen’s tea-table had agreed to come all together to the celebrated Santeodoro’s studio, and perhaps accomplish—what no one had ever done—the feat of finding him at work.

A rustle of silk and laces, bright colours, golden hair, filled the room. Giglio stood silent and quiet and very pale in the midst of them. They were not surprised, for it was said that the great sculptor was always silent and pale, and they flocked round him eagerly.

“It is your last work, the very last, that no one has seen yet that we long to see,” cried Lady Blanche peering about with her eye-glass.

“Come, Signor Santeodoro, you will not disappoint us.”

“All my work goes home at once,” said Giglio courteously, in the grave English which Gian had never been able to master, and still could not understand. “I seldom have anything to show. This group has just returned from the Academy. It is to be packed to-morrow for America.”

“Oh, the Cupid and Psyche! Do not insult us by supposing that we do not know that well,” cried Mrs. Richard Owen.

“Yes, it is the new work—that which no one has yet been privileged to see. You will show it to us, will you not?” said a pretty affected girl coaxingly.

Giglio bowed. He had all the stiff grave courtesy of an Italian among acquaintances. He rarely relaxed from this manner, and allowed himself no intimacies. He drew back at once when pleasant acquaintance seemed on the verge of ripening into friendship. One step beyond formality and his secret would be endangered.

“I will show you the work on which I am engaged,” he said with his careful foreign pronunciation, and turning to Gian, he spoke rapidly in Italian. “Let these Signori see our last work, Gian.”

“At your service, Signor Maestro,” Gian answered as he obeyed. A group, still in the clay and covered with a dripping cloth, stood in the best working light. Giglio helped him to remove the covering, and it stood revealed.

The statue of a girl in Greek dress, herding goats, one of which lay at her feet. The modelling was exquisitely fine. The face of the girl was that of Nanna. Gian had modelled it from recollection of every feature, even to the very defect of the face, the too great thinness of the jaw, which gave a young wistfulness to the expression.

"Charming, quite enchanting," praises echoed on every side. "What grace, what an exquisite composition!"

The chorus of praises filled the air. Presently Lady Blanche said in a low voice to Giglio: "What a strange and interesting face your assistant has, Signor Santeodoro. Do you ever trust him to do any of your work?"

"Trust him? I should think so. He is a genius!"

"Ah, you artists are not always so generous," cried one of his guests. "I suppose his technical power makes him of great use to you. Does he ever do work of his own?"

Giglio looked thoughtful. "Yes," he said suddenly. "He does work of his own. I will send him to fetch tea. In his absence I will show it to you. I should like to have your opinion of his work."

He rapidly gave an order to Gian, who went into the inner studio and shut the door.

"He is curiously sensitive, this fellow of mine," said Giglio, with strangely quivering lips. "What I am going to show you is work into which he has put his whole ambition. I want greatly to hear an unbiassed opinion. I send him away because I want fair criticism, and I would not have him wounded, for it cuts deep."

The ladies glanced at each other with deep interest; there was something very touching in this famous artist's tenderness for the inferior work of his humble friend. Lady Blanche spoke very gently.

"Our ignorant criticism could not hurt anyone. We shall only humbly remember that you have called him a genius."

Giglio said no more. With nervous fingers he drew the cover off another group already done into marble, and he stood back, his large excited eyes darting from one face to another.

"Oh!"

That was the first exclamation. They did not know what to say. The idea was excellent, the group ought to have been beautiful. A young mother seated on a stone bench with a child in her arms, but something was wrong, the tender expression had become a grin, the quaintness, grotesque, it was a little wrong everywhere. When a voice sings out of tune, it is but a demi-semitone out, a fraction of a tone, perhaps, but it becomes an aching discord, and the effect of the marble group on the spectators was the same.

Giglio's flashing eyes saw and read the sentence.

"Well?" he said bitterly.

"You see, amateurs do not understand," said Lady Blanche timidly. "As your poor friend is not here, I may confess—may I not?—that to my untrained eye it seems very bad."

"What?" said Giglio passionately. "Do you not see the look which the mother casts on her child, the yearning ecstasy which breathes through every movement of her slender form and delicate throat? Do you not recognise the pathos which makes that

slightly hollow eye-lid cover unshed tears? Bah, you do not understand!"

"That is it, no doubt," said one of the party rather stiffly. "But, after all, we are capable of understanding this," and he pointed to the young goat-herd. "This will take the world by storm and pile up your fame! You are very kind, Signor Santeodoro, but even the warmest friendship will not make bad work into good."

"Then it is bad?" said Giglio, and his head sank on his breast.

"Come, come, my friend," cried Lady Blanche gaily. "To acknowledge failure in a friend need not be so tragic. If you have influence with him, direct his talents into some other channel, or let him be satisfied with the share of fame which must fall on him as your assistant."

Gian at this moment came in with the tea, which he set down. Looking up he saw the group of the mother and child uncovered, and Giglio standing by it with a curiously despondent look on his face. He went rapidly across to the statue and covered it up, and then he took a chair to his master, mutely asking him to sit down. There was something wistful and protecting in the movement which struck one of the lookers-on.

"How strange that scene was," said Lady Blanche to Mrs. Owen, when half an hour later they had left the studio. "The sculptor seemed to care more for the success of that queer-looking deformed man than for his own. It is most touching."

But one among the group who had invaded Santeodoro's studio did not join in the conversation. He was an artist also, celebrated in black and white, a curious, silent, manly fellow, who had travelled as war-correspondent, and had sketched wild scenes and many emotions; among others, the unmistakable expression of hungry defeat. Jack Thorne was interested.

## CHAPTER VII.

JACK THORNE and Giglio Santeodoro met at dinner that night, at a small party given by an enthusiastic lion-hunter—Mrs. Dick Montacute. When the ladies had left the dining-room and the men were smoking cigarettes, Jack Thorne changed his place, took a chair next to that of the Italian sculptor, and opened the conversation.

"I want you to grant me a signal favour, Santeodoro. Come *sans refus!*"

"All that I possess is at your service, my friend."

"That is prettily said, but all the same, I fear you will deny my request."

"Put me to the test."

"Let me see you at work."

"No!"

The answer was so short and sharp that Thorne started.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly.

"For nothing, nothing!" exclaimed Giglio irritably. "If I was curt I am sorry. The truth is that I am tired of refusing. I do not allow anyone to see me work. To have someone spying on me would paralyse my hand."

"I did not mean to intrude on you," said Jack haughtily. "I will apply to your man instead."

"But what for? What is it you want?" exclaimed Giglio. "My man's time is fully occupied. I do not wish him to take pupils."

"What does he do for you?"

"He does all the marble, except the finishing touches. I rarely touch it till the last."

"And the clay? Does he do all the clay also?"

Giglio looked at him fiercely.

"That would be hardly possible," he said.

"He is a strange-looking fellow," said Jack. "By the way his hands and fingers work, one would imagine that they were never out of the clay."

"It is a peculiarity, he is very industrious. He speaks no English."

"But I speak Italian like a native. You do not remember me, Santeodoro, but I was also a pupil of Calleo."

"Indeed!"

Jack was studying the face of the Italian as he spoke, watching it very closely, but he could not satisfy himself as to whether the dark cheek turned a little whiter, for Giglio was engaged in lighting a fresh cigarette, and his voice when he spoke was careless enough.

"So you also were a pupil of Calleo? Was it the same year? By the light of achieved success I now see what bad work we produced! *Per Bacco!* when I think of the Ariadne which gave me the prize!"

"Yes," said Jack with a short laugh. "Your Adriadne was much the same kind of work as that you showed us to-day—done by that queer hunchback of yours."

"Hardly so good," said Giglio lightly. "My fellow has genius. He might go far had he time and opportunity, but it is not worth his while; I pay him well."

"Ah, you pay him well? Well, good service is worth a high price."

When they went upstairs to join the ladies, Giglio hung back for a moment and glanced at himself in the glass. His face was livid, and he had to dry the drops of cold perspiration which glued together his black hair.

The next day Santeodoro's studio was shut up. Vans and wagons, loads of straw, all the paraphernalia of packing filled the street, visitors were told that the great sculptor was tired of London and was gone, but whither no one could tell; they had left no address.

The two Italians had moved into the country. Giglio had already been in treaty for a country house, and he now closed hastily with an offer he had received of one suited to his requirements. He must get away from London, out of reach of that curious gaze of Jack Thorne's which shook his nerves so unbearably.

The house was a large country house with a well-lighted dining-room on the ground floor which he could turn into a studio, regardless of the damages such a proceeding would entail at the end of a year's lease.

The house was situated in a dreary part of the country, without hill or smallest rising of the ground to break the monotonous flat. It had a certain dull beauty of its own—the grey browns and rusty colouring of scant vegetation, the distant line of dark foam-edged sea, grey sands, grey skies, and pools of black marsh water lying in long lines across the land.

Santeodoro at that moment cared not one farthing for the beauty or hideousness of the country. He had found a large commodious cheap house, where he and Gian could work hard, and be sheltered from prying eyes and inquisitive questions—and his nerves were badly shaken.

But it was different with Gian. To him the whole aspect of the place was more hateful than anything he had ever imagined. As the days and weeks passed an invincible depression gained on him. The subject on which he was engaged, the figure of Portia, did not appeal to his imagination—the man drooped and pined, and but for the love of his master, which forced him to conceal his feelings for his sake, he would have broken down.

The autumn set in with great severity. There were few trees at Landbury, and these shed their sodden dying leaves very early. A thick mist was constantly round about, hemming in the house. The turf around it was so wet that at every footstep the water squelched up. The nights closed in early and were very long and dark.

It had always been Giglio's habit after the day's work was over to go out for a walk, and now he found this walk more necessary to him than ever, as a relief to the deadly monotony of his life; but every day it required more courage and became more of an effort.

It had never entered the head of the sun-loving Italian that days and weeks could pass of this unbroken grey mist, through which the sun never even attempted to break.

One evening he started for his walk, when the quick gathering darkness made the house intolerable, and as usual he took his way down to the shore.

It was a curious sight to see this Southerner with his wide cloak flung over his shoulder, his broad hat drawn low over the delicate dark face which was growing daily more thin and haggard. This evening the fog had lifted, for a cold wet wind was blowing fiercely.

Never in his own country would Giglio have dreamt of venturing

out in such weather, but here he could not help it. He and Gain had been working all day. Giglio had not been satisfied with Gain's conception of the Portia, and instead of arguing the point with volubility, Gian had agreed with him, and worked on in dull silence, so that the indescribable weight of his depression was too much to bear. He felt that he must get away from it or die.

The sea tumbled heavily on the sands, each great wave tipped with white gleaming foam. The sky was all one torn mass of clouds, lying jet black on streaks of angry orange. The wind rising more and more dashed the summits of the waves wildly, tossing foam and spray into the air.

Giglio came down to the shore and stood as near as he could to the water with safety. There was a rough post driven deep into the sand, and the hurly-burly of wind was such that he was glad to put his arm round it to steady himself against the blasts.

His thoughts were in a wild tumult also, for once in harmony with Nature—the haunting thought was tormenting him this night, What was he doing here? Over and over again during the past three years he had been oppressed by the sense of wrong, of imposture, but never before had it come upon him with such overpowering force. It almost seemed to him in that hour as if he had sold his soul to the powers of darkness, that he was a lost man. He clenched his teeth hard and his face was white and drawn as merciless truth forced its way into his brain. What had he become? This man who had begun life with noble aspirations, high ideals, how had the promise of his glorious youth been kept? The higher the nature the greater its fall—and words rang in his ears as if uttered by his accusing angel. "Impostor! this life should have been the interpretation of the beautiful mind bestowed on you at your birth—the glowing imagination, the love of the pure and lofty, the yearning after the beauty which is this world's manifestation of perfection, and what have you made of it? a false imposture, a living, breathing lie."

Giglio looked up at the gathering darkness, the grey desolation around him, and his heart cried out, "What have I gained? I have destroyed my life, I have lost my soul; and for what?" The vision of Cristina that passed before him maddened him. The hard looks, the angry words, the cold glance of her eyes into his. For a woman he had given all, and was it worth while? Was the greatest love on earth worth the sacrifice of conscience, truth and honour?

Suddenly before his eyes passed a vision of home as it used to be. The blue hills, the silvery olive slopes, the golden sunshine flooding the valley with mellow light, the song of birds was in the air, the balmy scent of lemon flowers, of sweet bay-leaves, of the hot sun on cyprus boughs, filled his senses, and a passionate yearning came over him for that which was gone, for the Eden in which he had dwelt an honest man—his lost Paradise. He threw out his arms with a cry of longing.

A huge black cloud broke overhead, and through the sweeping wind rushed the fierce pelting rain, blotting out sky and sand and sea, so that for a while his whole self was absorbed into a fight with the elements.

The storm swept by, he was soaked to the skin and icy cold. He raised his numbed hands and pushed away the hair from his eyes, and the instinct of seeking rest and comfort made him turn back towards the dreary house.

It became very dark, the rain ceased to fall in torrents, but in a heavy blinding mist, as he struggled on.

"Gian will be uneasy and be waiting for me," he said to himself, relying forlornly on Gian's kindly care of him which never failed.

But Gian was not at the door.

With frozen hands Giglio managed to get the latch-key into the lock, and let himself in. The large bare hall was feebly lighted by an oil-lamp.

"Gian must have left the studio," said Giglio to himself, but he pushed the door open and went in.

The studio was very dark, only lighted by the fitful light from a fire-place piled up with logs of wood. By the pedestal on which stood the blocked-out figure of Portia sat Gian with his face buried in his hands, while great sobs shook him from head to foot.

The poor fellow had struggled manfully to keep to himself the agony of his home-sickness, but it had overmastered him at last—and Giglio was out—he had allowed himself to give way.

Giglio went up to him and put his hand on his shoulder. For the moment Gian could not respond.

"Gian," said his master hoarsely. "*Caro mio*. Do not sob like this. I am going to give it all up. I am not strong enough to persevere in a fraud. We will go home, and may God forgive me!"

Gian seized the ice-cold hand and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Madonna bless you, Signor Maestro!" he exclaimed.

But Giglio shrank back and shivered.

"Maestro!" he muttered to himself. "No master but a slave."

The next morning found him prostrate in the grip of a raging fever

(*To be concluded.*)

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## THE KING AGAINST TREVOR.

BY WALTER RICHARDS.

## I.

IF it had been in these days—which, by the way, would have been impossible—or if Hugh Trevor had been anything more remarkable than a simple-hearted, loyal country gentleman, there would have been a good deal more feeling caused by the news of his arrest for murder. As it was, with the exception of a weeping mother and sister in the old Lincolnshire Manor House, and two furiously indignant young men whose habitat was the Inner Temple, nobody seemed to have much interest in the matter: if we except the Right Honourable Sir Bertram Sims, one of the judges of his Majesty's Court of King's Bench, who was to try the prisoner, and Mr. Sergeant Pierpoint, Q.C., who had somehow been specially retained to lead for the prosecution. They both hated the very name of Trevor: Sir Bertram because Hugh had, when at Oxford, administered a sound thrashing to his son Frederick in connection with a disreputable case of cheating at cards, which led to young Sims's premature retirement from the university; and Pierpoint because in one of that gentleman's numerous intrigues of the amatory order his would-be victim had found a champion in Hugh's father, who had made things remarkably unpleasant for the gay Lothario.

So altogether things looked black for the prisoner, and nobody realised this better than Frank Vane and Guy Bellairs, the two young Templars before referred to.

"Good heavens! It will break Maude's heart," groaned Vane, as, for the hundredth time, they discussed the horrible position.

Bellairs swore deeply and affirmatively.

"Who's with Pierpoint? It's not his circuit."

"A fellow named Hindley. He's no account, and won't have anything to do. That demon Pierpoint wants to put the rope round Hugh's throat with his own dirty hands; that's why he managed to get retained. He knows there will be precious few men there that know him."

"Forrest and Haines defend; but what can they do?"

Bellairs gloomily shook his head. The powers of counsel for the defence were notoriously limited in those days; yet an eloquent advocate could have made a telling appeal to the jury out of the facts. They were as follows.

A French gentleman, M. de Barère, who had been living for

some time at Lynn, was suddenly suspected by the authorities of giving information to the enemy. A warrant was obtained, and a crowd, always easily roused against a Frenchman, accompanied the officers. No resistance appeared to have been offered, but all at once a girl's shriek was heard, and Mdlle. de Barère was seen struggling in a man's arms. She was snatched away, and Hugh Trevor confronted the assailant with a drawn sword; there was a scuffle and struggle, and the man fell pierced through the heart. Here were materials for a really effective speech which would go far to get the prisoner off. Unfortunately no speech by counsel was allowed. Monsieur de Barère and his daughter had escaped, and the slain man, a roistering, dissolute swaggerer, who had more than once expatiated in his cups on the charms of the pretty French girl, was by way of being a favourite as a tall fellow and a dashing dog.

"Let us go out and see if we can hear anything," said Vane.

They were about to leave the room when a gentle timid tap was heard at the door, and opening it they found themselves face to face with a girl—pale, nervous, dishevelled as by haste, but of a dazzling beauty which positively took them aback.

"A thousand pardons," she stammered in good English, though with a fascinating foreign accent. "It is Mr. Vane that I am seeking."

"I am he, madam," replied Frank, with a profound bow, "entirely at your command, and your very humble servant."

"Ah, I am glad! I have brought this letter, monsieur."

"Pray be seated, madam. I have your permission?"—breaking open the cover.

The letter was written in a feigned hand and bore no signature. It ran as follows:

"The writer is informed that Mr. Vane is a friend of Mr. Hugh Trevor, now in prison on a false charge of murder. If it is necessary to save his life, the French gentleman whose daughter Mr. Trevor defended will appear to give evidence. The young lady herself is dangerously ill and unconscious. Mr. Vane, of course, knows that this step would be fatally dangerous to the gentleman in question, but it shall be taken if all other means fail. Mr. Vane is requested to adopt any measures possible for his friend's benefit, and to spare no expense, towards the defraying of which the bearer will hand him five hundred pounds, and will satisfy him that more can be forthcoming."

"You are doubtless aware of the purport of this letter?" said Vane to his fair visitor.

"But yes. It is my——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the young barrister with a smile, "no name is mentioned, but I daresay I could hazard a shrewd guess. I trust the—the young lady mentioned is really not seriously ill."

The girl's large eyes filled with tears.

"I fear much that she will die, *ma pauvre sœur*."

The last words were almost lost in a sob. Bellairs to whom Vane had handed the letter could stand his isolation no longer.

"Confound it, Frank," he whispered, "do present me or bring me into it somehow. Can't you see the girl's——"

"Will you allow me, madam, to present to you my friend, Mr. Guy Bellairs, a learned counsel in the law, and like myself a warm friend to Hugh Trevor."

"And tell your—the gentleman who wrote this letter," burst in Guy, "that Vane will do everything possible and that I will help him."

[As he explained afterwards to his friend, "I know I oughtn't to have taken the words out of your mouth, Frank, but I couldn't see that angel of a girl crying and say nothing. Did you ever see such eyes?"]

"Ah, it is good to hear that—it is good and I thank you." It was to Guy that she spoke. "I am sure there must be something one can do—something—is it not so? But I have to give you another packet," and she handed to Vane a bulky pocket-book.

"This will be useful," he said, "and I will account for it strictly. But pray believe, and tell your—the gentleman, that we needed no incentive to make us do our best for Hugh."

"But I know that well. And it is not only for him that you will be working, but for—for the gentleman who sent me, and for my Corinne, who will die if Monsieur Trevor suffers."

"And for yourself," added Guy quickly.

"That is nothing, nothing at all. But yes, for myself, if you will, who am suffering with those my heart loves."

Vane wondered why she should blush so vividly as she spoke the last words; when, however, he caught sight of the look in his friend's eyes as he leaned against the mantelpiece gazing down on the sweet face which for the moment had been lifted up to his, he ceased to wonder.

"You have indeed given us another incentive—if that is possible," he said smiling. "Will you let me know how we can communicate with you?"

The girl crossed to the table and wrote a line on a sheet of paper.

"*'Louise la Croix,'*" he read, "*'at Mr. Wynter's Hotel, Holborn.'* I am glad we are such near neighbours, it will be easier for us to meet."

A few minutes later Miss la Croix went away, declining, much to Bellairs' regret, any offer to escort her home. She had, she said, an attendant with her.

"Trevor's got to be saved somehow, Vane," was Bellairs' first observation when they were alone.

"We've made the same remark before, I fancy."

"Yes, but there's a difference now."

And Vane realized that, so far as his friend was concerned, there undoubtedly was.

An hour later they were dining together, their enjoyment of the meal being considerably impaired by the presence of Pierpoint, who was in offensively good spirits. Bellairs glanced at the dapper, young-looking serjeant with vicious intentness. Suddenly he started.

"I take it you'd risk a good deal in this matter, Frank?" he whispered.

"Everything—including my life."

"Well, it may come to that. You've finished? Come along then. I have an idea; desperate, I admit, but still an idea. The novelty of the sensation is refreshing. Come!"

"What is it—and where am I to come?"

"I'll tell you as we walk along. We're going to the theatre; I promised Aston I'd look him up at his benefit."

## II.

MR. JUSTICE SIMS' clumsy but comfortable travelling carriage was slowly making its way along the desolate road that leads from Newark to Lincoln. The assizes were to open on the morrow, and he was pleasantly engaged in pondering on the happy circumstance which would enable him to perform at once a virtuous action and to gratify his personal resentment by sentencing Hugh Trevor to a felon's death. It was really quite providential, he reflected, that he happened to be the judge who would try the case; some of his brethren were but too prone to be ridiculously considerate to prisoners, rigorously sifting the evidence brought against them, and giving them every facility for putting their case favourably to the jury. No nonsense of that sort for him! He would make very short work——

But just then the carriage came unaccountably to a sudden stop; a deep voice was heard sternly admonishing the post-boys, while another threatened the pretentious "guards" on the box and rumble of the coach. Then the door was opened and the gleaming barrel of a horse pistol appeared in unpleasantly close proximity to the judge's head.

"Highwaymen, by Heaven!" gasped Sir Bertram.

"Precisely so, my lord," serenely replied the owner of the pistol; "I perceive that further introduction is unnecessary. May I trouble your lordship to alight. Nay, be quick, sir; like your lordship, when I have made up my mind—shall we say to hang a man?—I am somewhat impatient of argument, however good."

"You know me, I perceive," said the judge, with some difficulty steadying his voice to a proper tone of warning severity, "and are doubtless aware of the risk you run,"

"Not a whit more in your lordship's case than any other. Even a learned judge can't do more than hang a man. You are somewhat slow—allow me to assist you."

And the next moment Sir Bertram found himself standing on the muddy road in the grasp of two masked horsemen. Looking round he saw the guards and post-boys being pinioned—and submitting to the process with philosophical equanimity—after which they were bidden to lie down face to the ground. He tried in vain to distinguish the features of his captors; both wore crape masks and heavy riding coats. The figure and what he could see of the face of one of them, struck him as being not unlike his own, and Sir Bertram felt hurt and indignant accordingly.

"Now then, Jim."

And before the judge knew what was being done, a gag was thrust into his mouth, his arms were tightly bound to his side, and he was hoisted with as little ceremony as a sack of potatoes on to the saddle in front of one of the horsemen. Then, without a word, his bearer cantered off, and the next minute there was the sound of pistol shots, shouts, and the galloping of horses.

By the side of a small wood his captor stopped, and lowered Sir Bertram not ungently to the ground.

"Your lordship must excuse this rough handling. I can now assure you that you are in no bodily danger, nor is any harm intended you provided you make no attempt to escape. There is a nag here for your use. If you will give me your promise to accompany me quietly I will release you from your bonds. I will remove the gag first so that you can speak. Do you promise?"

"I have no option," growled the judge when he had got his throat into speaking condition.

"Frankly, you haven't; only—and pay particular attention, my lord—there must be no mental reservation, no *arrière pensée*, or— But we will not anticipate anything so unpleasant."

"What are you going to do with me? I warn you——"

"Tut, tut! Pray don't trouble to do anything of the kind. What am I going to do with you? Well, when you have taken your oath, and given your word of honour to make no attempt to escape, I propose to do myself the honour of entertaining your lordship at supper. We shall only have a little way to ride."

"For how long is my parole to be given?"

"A most sensible question. We shall understand each other capitally, I see. Well, it must depend on the Captain, but I think I can promise you your freedom in two or three days."

Sir Bertram was wet and cold; the mention of supper reminded him that he was hungry.

"I agree," he said, after a pause. "Of course, if I am rescued *vi et armis*——"

"In that case I may be under the painful necessity of putting a

bullet through your head. But I do not think you need be under any apprehension. Shall we start, then? I can promise your lordship a decent glass of wine."

A few minutes' sharp trot brought him to a solitary cottage. In response to the highwayman's whistle a man appeared and took the horses, and then the judge was courteously shown into a comfortable room where a cheery fire was burning, and the table spread with an appetizing supper.

"Egad! a pleasant sight after such a nasty night," said the highwayman genially. "Your lordship's bedroom is adjoining. With your permission we will sup at once, as I shall have, to my great regret, to leave you before long. You will pardon the modesty that prevents me removing my mask."

The supper was excellent; the highwayman was a delightful host, and under the influence of the wine which thoroughly merited the encomium passed on it, Sir Bertram's sullen anger began to thaw, and he was conscious of a feeling of regret when his host, with many courteous apologies for leaving him, declared that unavoidable business called him away.

"When I return we will talk matters over, my lord. I fear you may find it a little dull to-morrow; my fellows here are rather rough and scarcely companionable. They will see, though, that you want for nothing, and there are plenty of books to wile away the time. Perhaps, by the way, I ought to mention that the shutters are fixtures."

And with a deferential bow the highwayman took his departure.

### III.

THE guards and postboys had, it seemed, not given their illustrious employer credit for the heroism he possessed. They heard a horse ride away, then a pistol shot, cries of alarm from the robbers, and finally a general stampede. They were then released by the judge himself—who had evidently received a wound on the face during the victorious encounter—and told gruffly to proceed quickly. At Lincoln the judge apologised to the sheriff for being unable to receive him personally as his wound gave him some inconvenience, and repaired straight to the quarters prepared for him at the George Hotel. Later in the evening he sent to request Mr. Pierpoint to call on him, and a message was subsequently sent to that gentleman's lodgings requesting that his papers and luggage should be sent to the George. It transpired later on that one of his lordship's retinue had been taken ill. A medical man who fortunately happened to be in the hotel pronounced that the illness, though accompanied by a good deal of delirium, was not alarming and only required perfect quiet and isolation in a secluded room.

The following day, fraught with the fate of the luckless Hugh

Trevor, dawned dull and gloomy. His was the only trial of importance, and those who took enough interest in it to think about the matter augured ill for the prisoner from the announcement that the Court would not sit till late in the afternoon, his lordship's medical attendant insisting on his resting till then after the injuries he had received in his heroic struggle with the highwaymen. Hindley, the junior for the Crown, was sent for for a conference at the George, and found his learned leader suffering from a cold, in bed, and his head swathed in flannel wraps, in the endeavour to patch himself up for his duty in Court.

At four o'clock the Court was opened, and—to quote the leading local journal—his lordship, his face still partially enveloped in surgical bandages, took his seat. He was evidently suffering, and complained of the glare of the wax candles which were accordingly removed further from the Bench. The prisoner appeared despondent though calm.

“Hugh Trevor, hold up thy hand.”

Then the indictment was read. How that, not having the fear of God before his eyes but moved thereto by the instigation of the devil, he, Hugh Trevor, on the seventh day of November, in the year of the reign of his present Majesty, etc., etc., did wickedly and feloniously with force and arms assassinate and do to death one Thomas Worssam against the peace of our lord the King his Crown and dignity.

The prisoner pleaded Not guilty.

The counsel for the Crown, whose severe cold and voluminous face-wrappings made his voice hoarse and indistinct, rose to address the Court. He had only spoken a few words, when Mr. Forrest, of counsel for the defence, interposed with a request that the prisoner might be allowed to receive a written communication from a near relative.

“I see no objection,” said the judge tersely.

The communication, whatever it was, had a most startling effect on the prisoner—surprise, alarm, and joy contending for expression on his hitherto placid features. He gazed round the Court, and his eyes rested a moment on the counsel for the Crown, he then bowed to the judge and said in faltering tones, “I thank your lordship.” The speech for the prosecution then recommenced, and it soon became obvious that the Crown were not altogether satisfied with the strength of their case. When the learned serjeant had finished, the judge observed in languid tones:

“I presume, brother Pierpoint, that your evidence goes to legal murder. Much of what you have shadowed forth seems to me at present, I must confess, as pointing to chance medley. Doubtless, however, your evidence will establish the crime.”

“Your lordship will, I trust, be satisfied with my evidence,” replied the serjeant. “Call Thomas Foot.”

Foot was one of the sheriff's officers, and spoke to the warrant for

de Barère's arrest, the acceptance of the deceased's offer to assist the authorities, and to seeing him killed by the prisoner.

Forrest, evidently bearing in mind the remark of the judge, cross-examined Foot and the following witnesses with a view to eliciting that there was much confusion and excitement, and might, for all they knew, have been a free fight.

"Have you any further evidence, brother Pierpoint?" inquired the judge wearily.

Hindley leant over and conferred excitedly with his leader. The latter, however, shook his head, and was heard to mutter in reply, "Not a bit of good."

"I do not see that I can carry the case further, my lord. I venture to submit, however——"

"Pardon me, brother. Do I understand that there is absolutely no evidence to show that the prisoner knew of the deceased man's remarkable temporary official character?"

The serjeant was again observed to negative a whispered suggestion from his junior.

"I must admit that the same point, my lord, had occurred to me. But it is scarcely essential——"

"You surprise me, brother Pierpoint," interposed his lordship with warmth. "From the evidence, such as it is, it is at least a credible supposition that the prisoner even imagined he was assisting instead of opposing justice. No, no—your case completely fails. Gentlemen of the jury, I have no choice but to direct you that there is no evidence against the prisoner, and that it is your duty to return a verdict of 'Not guilty.'"

There was considerable sensation as his lordship uttered these completely unexpected words, and after a pause the foreman observed that they thought the killing sufficiently proved.

"This is a question of law, gentleman," said the judge with some asperity, "and consequently for me and not for you to decide. You must take it from me that there is no evidence adduced connecting the prisoner with the crime for which he stands charged."

After further hesitation the jury, with evident unwillingness, returned a formal verdict of "Not guilty," and the prisoner was discharged from custody. The learned judge, whose appearance showed how much he was suffering, then left the bench, and the Court cleared.

Acting under medical advice, his lordship left Lincoln that evening for the purpose of putting himself under the care of his own physician, taking with him Mr. Serjeant Pierpoint, whose health likewise left much to be desired. This was the more to be regretted as, with incredible effrontery, a couple of highwaymen stopped the carriage in the same lonely part of the heath where the recent outrage had been committed, and, overawing the servants, actually abducted the judge and his companion.

## IV.

A WEEK later Vane and Bellairs were again in the former's chambers in the Temple. A broad-sheet lay on the table before them, describing with an infinitude of italics and notes of exclamation the recent "Outrage upon one of his Majesty's judges and a learned serjeant! Gross miscarriage of justice! Escape of the prisoner!"

"It will be remembered," wrote the indignant editor, "that a week ago we had to chronicle that Mr. Justice Sims was attacked by highwaymen when on his road to open the Lincoln Assizes. It was generally reported at the time that with singular courage the judge had resisted and put to flight his assailants, proceeding afterwards, though wounded in the encounter, to Lincoln, where he tried the man Hugh Trevor committed on a charge of murder. Much comment was made at the time on the collapse of the prosecution, on the remarkable rulings of the judge, and on the singular apathy of Mr. Serjeant Pierpoint, who led for the Crown. This is now explained, if the term can be accurately employed in connection with an unparalleled exhibition of insolence and cunning. On the day following the abortive trial the landlord of the George Hotel was astounded by the arrival of a gentleman who declared that he was Sir Bertram Sims, and that he had been a prisoner in the hands of the highwaymen for two days. Scarcely had the landlord recovered from the shock of this recital—which was soon proved to be correct—than a violent noise of shouting was heard from a distant part of the hotel, and a dishevelled individual, struggling with a couple of waiters and a chambermaid, burst into the room where the judge was interviewing the landlord, and announced that he was Mr. Serjeant Pierpoint. He informed his auditors that on the eve of the Assizes the pseudo-judge had sent a message requesting his presence at the hotel. When he arrived he was invited to have a glass of wine while Sir Bertram was dressing, and the next thing he remembered was waking in a strange room and being visited by a person—evidently an accomplice—who professed to be a doctor, and pronounced him suffering from brain fever. Since then he had been watched day and night by attendants, who treated him as a madman. The places of judge and Crown counsel had been taken by friends of the prisoner Hugh Trevor, who was acquitted, and has now left the country. In order effectually to cover their escape, the daring impostors had arranged for another highway robbery, in which their precious persons were 'kidnapped' by their friends. It is lamentable to state that no clue exists as to the identity of the insolent scoundrels."

"How sad!" said Vane demurely, when his friend had finished reading.

"Isn't it? It's lamentable to think that Hugh Trevor, in the company of M. de Barère and the convalescent Corinne, are by this time comfortably ensconced in the old château in Brittany. The Emperor—or Corsican, I suppose we ought to call him—has restored de Barère's estates and reinstated him in his rank."

Vane's next observation was curiously irrelevant.

"It's just as well, Guy, that there's no actual need for either of us to practise. I don't fancy somehow meeting either the judge or Pierpoint again—just yet."

"Mistaken modesty, my friend. I have bowed to Sir Bertram and condoled with Pierpoint, who was good enough, like the snob that he is, to congratulate me on my uncle's death."

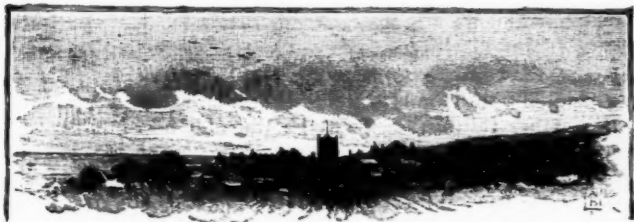
"Perhaps I am too modest, but—you forget my *petit souper à deux* with his lordship."

"Well, perhaps you're right. By the way, I've settled up with Aston and the other fellows. What are you going to do now?"

"Going to pay a visit of congratulation to Miss Maude Trevor, who is staying with a young lady called Mdle. la Croix—better known, perhaps, as de Barère—at the house of the former's aunt."

"And I'm coming with you," said Bellairs with alacrity.

And they went.



## POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS.

**S**UPERSTITION has been defined as the fear of the unknown, as the child of ignorance, and hence, generally speaking, where education enters thence superstition departs, or at least is kept within bounds.

The number of those who are superstitious to-day is certainly smaller than it was, say, fifty years ago. Yet for all that we have in our midst people who seem to have superstition rooted in their very constitutions, and neither education nor experience can eradicate it. They are prone to put a meaning, either good or ill, on everything unusual that comes across their path. The shooting of a star or the screeching of an owl alarms them, even the voice of a cricket strikes terror to their hearts, more so perhaps than would the roaring of a lion. This is quite natural; for to a mind full of superstition there is nothing too insignificant to appear dreadful.

This is so not only with ignorant people, but even with those who have had a liberal education.

We all know for instance how a good many persons dread the number thirteen, and would not be induced for anything on earth to sit thirteen at table. In connection with this superstition there is a story told of a lady who, having invited some friends to dinner, found when they were all assembled that they numbered thirteen. At first she was disconcerted, but necessity being the mother of invention, she soon devised a plan for averting the mischievous spell; she made her cat sit at table, thus making the company fourteen. Another story, showing how intense was the belief in the unluckiness of thirteen, is told of the foundation of Christ's College, Cambridge, which, in the time of Edward VI., consisted of a Master and twelve Fellows; and on this being pointed out to the king, he forthwith added another Fellowship.

The number thirteen seems to be the only odd number which is considered unlucky; usually odd numbers are looked upon as bringing good fortune. Hence, when setting eggs to be hatched an odd number, other than thirteen, is placed; and when taking pills some people will not swallow an even number! A most peculiar superstition connected with numbers, is the belief that the seventh son of a seventh son, in direct line, is an infallible doctor—some even believing that he can cure by the touch. When such a child is born he is christened Doctor, and thus you may find a collier or mechanic of the name of "Doctor Jones," or "Doctor Smith," with no pretensions, of course, to being learned.

Another popular superstition is the wide-spread belief that Friday is an unlucky day—a belief which may be traced, perhaps, to the

tradition that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit on a Friday, and died on a Friday. For some people this is evidence enough, and, accordingly, they will not begin a journey on that day, or go into a new house, or even cut their nails, as the following rhyme shows :

"If you cut your nails on Monday, you cut them for news ;  
 If you cut them on Tuesday, a pair of new shoes ;  
 If you cut them on Wednesday, you cut them for health ;  
 If on Thursday you cut them, you do so for wealth ;  
 If you cut them on Friday, you cut them for woe ;  
 Cut them the next day, and a journey you'll go ;  
 If you cut them on Sunday, you cut them for evil ;  
 For all the next week you'll be ruled by the devil."

From this it will be seen that Sunday, as well as Friday, is unfavourable for cutting one's nails. To be born on Sunday, however, is a very fortunate thing ; a person so favoured is considered safe from drowning and hanging. No doubt most people have heard, too, of the belief that if a knife and fork, when done with, be placed crosswise on the plate, great misfortunes will overtake the people present ; and we all know of the superstition that a knife cuts friendship—that if one of two friends gives a knife as a present to the other, their friendship will soon be broken. Sailors also have their superstitions. They will not whistle on board ship, holding that to whistle is to enrage the evil one, who, in revenge, will stir up the wind and the waves. Neither will they pare their nails on board ship ; and when they see a cat licking itself rather more than usual, they believe that a storm is approaching.

Some people object to others handing them salt, believing the superstition that a person to whom salt is handed will be shortly overtaken by some great calamity, and hence the saying : "Help to salt, help to sorrow."

One may cause sorrow, too, by taking something out of a house on New Year's Day before bringing something in.

"If you take out, then take in—  
 Bad luck will begin.  
 But if you take in, then take out—  
 Good luck comes about."

To have good luck continually in one's house one need only possess an old rusty horse-shoe. In remote country villages it is nothing unusual to find old horse-shoes nailed to the thresholds. This seems to have been the case in large towns as well, for it is said that some fifty years ago, in a certain street in London, no less than seventeen horse-shoes could be distinctly seen on the old houses.

In Lancashire there is a superstition that new clothes must be worn at Easter, or misfortune will befall. Even the poorest try to have something new to put on, though it be but a pair of stockings. Of the things which are believed to bring evil upon one, the two

most widely known are the breaking of a looking-glass, and the seeing oneself in a looking-glass by candle-light. In the former case it is feared either that misfortune will for seven years follow in the footsteps of the person who broke the glass, or that someone very dear to him will be carried off by the hand of Death. On this point Bonaparte's credulity may be mentioned. "During one of his campaigns in Italy," says M. de Constant, "he broke a looking-glass over Josephine's portrait. He did not rest until the return of the courier whom he had at once despatched to assure himself of her safety, so great was the impression of her death on his mind."

Speaking of death reminds us of some curious superstitions about it.

For instance, it is believed that the departure of life is delayed whilst any door or window in the house remains closed. Among superstitious people, therefore, all the doors and windows of the room wherein a sick person is lying are opened when that person is *in extremis*. It is likewise believed that pigeons' feathers retard death, and accordingly sick persons are not allowed to sleep on them, since by so doing their pain is prolonged.

A good many people believe in the power of the evil eye. There are some, say they, who, if they look at a child, are able to inflict an injury upon it. But by the side of this superstition is another one about the removing of the injury which might be inflicted by an evil-eyed one. It is this: Blow in the child's face, then turn a red-hot coal in the fire and say, "The Lord be with us."

Not only is this believed, it is practised. When a child falls sick, a superstitious mother will at once trace the sickness to somebody's evil eye, and no sooner will she come to this conclusion than she will go through the before-mentioned formula. As we may suppose, it is hardly likely that the child will recover because this charm has been tried, and therefore, if such be the case, it will be tried a second time. Some mothers, no doubt on the principle that prevention is better than cure, write the word *Abracadabra* in a triangular form, and the child wears the paper on which it is written suspended from the neck.

Not only is this a charm against the power of the evil eye, it will also, it is believed, be effective against witches and evil diseases.

In some districts, when one mother is admiring the child of another, to show that she wishes it no harm, she will add "No evil eye," or "God bless it." Thus, if remarking on the beauty of the child she will say, "That's a fine child—God bless it!" or "It is a beauty—no evil eye!" All this goes to show how deep-rooted this superstition is. There are a great many more too, connected with children and with childhood. Thus in some parts it is considered a heinous offence to rock an empty cradle, for it is believed to betoken that cradles will always be empty by reason of the dearth of babies; while in other parts one of the popular couplets runs as follows:

"If you rock the cradle empty,  
Then you shall have babies plenty."

Evidently then, there is a twofold reason for this superstition. Another and rather curious superstition connected with children is that to prosper in life a child must go up in the world before it goes down. On leaving its mother's room for the first time, therefore, a baby is carried *up* the stairs before it is taken down. But in case the mother's room is in the top storey, the difficulty is overcome by placing a chair in the doorway and lifting the child over it.

It is also believed that a kitten and a baby cannot thrive under the same roof, and so, if kittens and a baby happen to be born at the same time, the kittens are at once removed from the house. A most interesting superstition, though perhaps not so widespread as some of those previously mentioned, is that when a boy and a girl are to be baptized in the same church on the same day, if the girl should be baptized first she will have a beard when she grows up, while the boy's face will be as smooth as a woman's !

Varying with different places and with different events, there are a number of popular superstitions which we might designate by the term prognostic.

It is believed that if certain things are in a certain position or show certain symptoms, certain events are about to happen. If a person should hear at night the continual howling of a dog or the chirping of a cricket, he will at once conclude that Death will shortly carry away some of his near and dear ones. When ravens, or swallows, or crows hover round the house in which a sick person lies, it is looked upon by the superstitious as a sign of that person's death.

A widespread superstition under this head is that the tingling of the right ear or the burning of the right cheek denotes that someone is speaking well of you ; but if it is the left ear that tingles, or the left cheek that burns, then the contrary is shown. When flecks of soot wave on the grate, strangers will shortly arrive. This is also shown by the itching of the nose ; while the itching of the feet is a sure sign that a long journey will have to be undertaken. Moreover, the itching of the right hand shows that money will be put into it, but the itching of the left betokens that money will have to be paid away.

Many of us, no doubt, would like to look into the future ; but we know that we cannot, and that it is well for us that we cannot. Yet, although they are ready to acknowledge this, some people believe anyone or anything which appears to give them this desired information.

Few believe in star-gazers and similar prognosticators, but there are a good many who believe that they can read the future out of certain books—the Bible and the works of Homer and Virgil are the favourites—by opening one of them at random and fixing upon any passage. With some this is an annual custom. On New Year's Day, soon after rising, they will open their Bible and read the two pages that first present themselves, fully believing that the events of the coming year will be hinted at in them.

There is a story told of Charles I. in connection with this superstition. When Charles was a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle, the poet Cowley one day visited him. After talking for some time, the king asked Cowley whether he would like to play at cards as a means of passing the time pleasantly. Cowley replied that he did not care to play at cards, and suggested another way of spending the time—that the king should see, by opening Virgil, what passage he would fix upon. The king agreed, and, taking Virgil's works, he opened the volume, and chanced upon Book IV., line 615, which the poet rendered—

“By a bold peoples’ stubborn arms oppressed,  
Forced to forsake the land he once possessed—  
Torn from his only son, let him in vain  
Seek help, and see his friends unjustly slain.  
Let him to base, unequal terms submit,  
In hopes to save his crown, but lose both it  
And life itself. Untimely let him die,  
And on an open stage, unburied, lie.”

As to misfortune itself, there are some people who, if they cannot trace it to anything that has happened, believe that the name of the person suffering is the cause of the trouble. This will account for the fact that when someone is dangerously ill, and the end seems to be coming near, as a last resource to relieve him his name is changed in the belief that the new name may be luckier than the old.

This changing of the name brings us to one of the many superstitions connected with marriage. It is considered very unlucky for a woman to marry a man whose surname begins with the same letter as her own. Hence

“To change the name and not the letter  
Is a change for the worse and not for the better.”

There is perhaps a greater mass of superstition woven around marriage than around anything else. In the first place, the month in which to marry is of consideration to some people; and in the next place the day of the week. May is looked upon as an unlucky month.

“Marry in May  
And you’ll rue the day.”

As for the day of the week, the following shows the belief on this point—

“Monday for health,  
Tuesday for wealth,  
Wednesday the best day of all;  
Thursday for crosses,  
Friday for losses,  
Saturday no luck at all.”

A good deal of superstition, too, centres round the wedding-ring. The majority of people will get married only with a gold ring—a

ring of any other metal is believed to bring sorrow and strife upon the loving couple. In poor districts dealers have been known to make a by no means inconsiderable addition to their incomes by hiring gold wedding-rings to couples who could not afford to buy them. The ring is usually worn on the fourth finger, and this is due to an old belief that an artery ran from that finger to the heart. By wearing it on the fourth finger, therefore, the symbol of love was, as it were, in touch with the heart. It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that modern science knows no such artery. Furthermore, it is believed that when a wedding-ring is so worn away as to come to pieces, either the one or the other of the married couple will die. This superstition may perhaps account for the heavy wedding-rings worn by some ladies. Again, it may be that the reader knows a lady who refuses under any circumstances whatever to take off her wedding-ring. This dislike is due to a superstition that "till death us do part" refers to the ring as well as to the couple, and that the severing of the ring from the finger may betoken the severing of husband and wife.

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## SONG.

My love hath wings that ever follow thee  
Where'er thou journeyest, by land or sea;  
My thoughts are wingèd, too, and fly to seek  
A welcome from thine eyes and blushing cheek.  
Ah, well thou knowest all their tender plea—  
"Dear heart, I love thee! Say thou lovest me!"

My hopes have wings that oft by day and night  
To thy sweet presence speed their ardent flight;  
And rainbow colours bridge the distance o'er,  
That seemed so desolate and cold before.  
Then softly comes thy answer to my plea—  
'Dear heart, true heart, believe—I love but thee!"

E. S.

## A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

WE certainly *are* rather unfortunate in our experiences. Other people are able to change their abode without being subject to all sorts of extraordinary and alarming manifestations, while it seems as if we could not go to live in a house of the most prosaic and ordinary type without becoming the victims of some uncanny occurrence.

Many members of my family have had some kind of natural affinity to the supernatural. They either dream dreams, have premonitions, or see ghosts. The spirits seem to know that we shall not try to reason them away as the illusions of an overwrought brain or a disordered digestion, and send for the doctor to order either a black draught or a holiday abroad.

No, they seem to feel sure of our sympathy. And if any disembodied spirit happened to have any bones about for which it desired decent burial, or hidden treasure which it required to be restored to its impoverished descendants, it would certainly take the opportunity, if any of us were under the same roof, to appear at midnight and claim assistance, though at the risk of scaring us out of our wits.

I always fancy that we carry about with us a kind of atmosphere or influence which enables spooks to continue their midnight rambles as usual, while some people have an antagonistic effect that quenches and silences the poor spirits. The latter sort of people, of course, do not believe in ghosts or apparitions; think it all utter nonsense: and naturally, for they never by any chance see, feel, or are conscious of such things.

Many Yorkshire families have this extra sense which makes them aware of anything supernatural. They can perceive the shadow of a crime or a mystery as easily as the presence of a spook itself—while others are utterly unconscious that there is anything unusual around them; just as a bloodhound can perceive and recognise the track of an unseen stranger, while the less gifted terrier is aware only of the footprints of his master.

We knew a lady in one of the Ridings who could always tell in some mysterious way if anyone she met had lost a relative by accident, or even if they were going to lose one.

She was a very brusque, outspoken dame, and would not hesitate to say to a complete stranger: "You have recently lost a near relative by drowning, have you not?" or: "You have some relations travelling just now, and one of them will meet with an accident on the mountains and be killed."

I have known her change her seat in a railway carriage and explain afterwards :

"That woman I was sitting beside has had someone belonging to her *hung*, and she will commit suicide before the next year is out ; so I did not fancy sitting near her."

It really was not canny, but it was very true.

But, of course, one did not live in a continual state of expecting experiences ; in fact, I had not hitherto had many ; which was fortunate, for I am excessively nervous.

My husband must have exercised a restraining influence, for on looking back, I find that he was generally absent at the time we were most annoyed by unaccountable disturbances.

On the present occasion Mark was leaving England, and as it was impossible to have us with him, because he was going to some out-of-the-way regions with an antiquarian, who, being unable to express himself clearly in writing, had persuaded Mark to go with him to describe his impressions and discoveries as they were freshly made, ladies would have been in the way ; therefore we were to be established in some quiet place near the sea before he left, where I might recover tone in the bracing breezes. "We" consisted of Fannie, my youngest sister, and myself.

We had seen the advertisement of what seemed a suitable little place at Shingleton, on the north-east coast.

The rent was extremely moderate, and all the arrangements having been completed with the agent of the owner—a widow who was living abroad—Mark ran down with us to see us settled in and to assure himself that we should be comfortable and happy there during his absence.

He remained three days, and was as charmed with "Far-Away Villa," its surroundings and neighbourhood, as we were ourselves, and he returned to town perfectly satisfied that we had been extremely lucky in "happening" upon the place, and relieved to think that we expected to be quite happy there without him.

"Now that he has gone," said Fannie, as we lounged into the drawing-room after lunch, feeling rather flat after Mark's departure, "let us re-arrange the furniture a little. Did you ever see a room like this, with the chairs and tables standing about for all the world as if they were waiting and did not know what to do next?"

"It does look rather as if it had been 'spring-cleaned,' and the new parlour-maid did not know where the things belonged," said I, glancing round ; "or as if the things had quarrelled and were not on speaking terms with each other."

"The worst of a furnished house," said Fannie, "is that one always feels a stranger in it. The things may be quite pretty and nice, but they represent another person's taste, a different personality. I am convinced that the people who lived here are as unlike either of us in character and disposition as can be imagined."

I laughed.

"Well, they were two women also, I believe, only the elder was a widow and the younger her daughter. They left, and afterwards the daughter died."

"And has nobody lived here since?"

"Oh, I believe the widow did let the house to a family, but they only stayed a short time, and it is only lately that it has been to be let again."

"Well, let us make this room look more comfortable," said Fannie, jumping up and seizing a little chair. I got up at once to help her, and we spent about an hour pleasantly and laboriously in trundling chairs, tables and cabinets from one part of the room to the other, trying different effects; till at last Fanny was more satisfied and remarked that the things did look a little more friendly towards each other.

Elizabeth, the house-parlour-maid, whose strong arms were of good service, declared, when all was finished, that the room looked "a deal more ladylike."

"It is curious," said I, afterwards, "that the landlady should have stipulated that no article of furniture should be moved from one room to another, but that everything should remain in the apartment in which we found it."

"Why?" said Fannie sharply.

"Oh, the agent said something about the late tenant having moved the things about in the house and got them all mixed; and the landlady has some sentimental objection to any change or displacement."

"What rubbish! Did the people move that massive sideboard out of the dining-room into this? or carry those inlaid cabinets into the bedrooms? or try to dine off some of these gimcrack tables?" said Fannie, sarcastically tilting her nose in the air. "It is arrant nonsense to make such a stipulation. Ah, here comes tea, and we well deserve it."

And we sat down to discuss our tea and scones.

The rest of the week the weather was simply delightful, and we were nearly always out taking long rambles, in which we thoroughly explored the surrounding country, or scrambling down the sandy cliff to wander along the lonely shore.

"Far-Away Villa" was well named, for it was rather isolated and stood far away from any other houses—with only a widish piece of garden and lawn between it and the edge of the cliff. From one large window in the side of the drawing-room there was a magnificent view over the bay—the garden on that side extending a considerable distance, sloping gradually to a sort of "chine" which formed its limit. There was another bow window at the end of the drawing-room, looking west, from which there was a view of the purple moors beyond through a wide gap left for that purpose in the belt of trees

planted as a screen from the high road, one curve of which was very plainly seen through the gap.

The views from both windows were lovely, but Fannie took a great dislike to the room, and would scarcely ever remain in it; she also had an extraordinary aversion to one particular chair—a handsomely carved and most comfortably-cushioned one.

One day she dropped into it without noticing, being weary with a long ramble. I saw her turn very white all at once, and just as I was exclaiming, "We went too far; you are tired out," she suddenly jumped up, saying:

"No, it is not that; it is this horrid chair. I didn't notice I was sitting in it; it always makes me feel queer. I hate it!" And she pushed it away to the other side of the room.

On Sunday morning I followed Fannie into the drawing-room on our return from church to give her a rose to add to some we had gathered on our way up the drive, which she was placing in one of the vases.

"Why on earth did Elizabeth take the trouble to move the things?" I exclaimed. "Did you ever see such an arrangement?"

There was the chair I have mentioned, drawn up in the west window with its back to the room, and a small round table carefully placed near the right side of it. I changed its position and went to take off my things for our early dinner. We went to afternoon service at a pretty little village church about three miles off, and when we came in to tea, there was the chair back in the same position!

I was annoyed. One of the girls must have been sitting there during our absence; a thing I particularly dislike.

Nothing remarkable occurred during the week. Fannie ran the "pomegranate chair," as we called it, on account of the pattern of its covering, into the darkest corner out of the way, that she might not inadvertently sit upon it.

So I was rather disgusted the next Sunday morning to find the chair back again in the window in its old position.

"It is really too stupid of Elizabeth," I exclaimed. "I shall just have her in, and see if I cannot get it into her head that that chair is to stay in the corner over there."

But Elizabeth was quite surprised when I called her attention to the position of the chair, and declared positively that she had never placed it there.

"I am quite sure, ma'am, that I left it where it was before, close to the revolving bookstand."

She was very certain about it, and I merely told her to be careful not to move it into the window again, and dismissed her. And it certainly did give me rather a start, when we came in from the afternoon service at Little Moorton, to find that dreadful chair in the window again, and the same little table beside it.

"This is beyond a joke," I exclaimed indignantly. "I will not have my orders flatly disobeyed."

Fannie stared at the chair with widely dilated eyes; then turned them slowly upon me.

"You are not doing it for a joke, are you, Fannie?" I asked; she would sometimes play pranks to tease me—this might be one of them.

But her disturbed reproachful look and her white cheeks convinced me that she had nothing to do with it.

I had the chair removed to a place near the door, almost behind the large screen, and the little table I banished to the other window.

We, or at least I, forgot all about it again, and thought there was an end of it, as nothing happened all the week; but when Sunday came again, there was that horrible chair back in the window.

I did not call Elizabeth that time; I was beginning to feel that the less the servants knew about the proceedings of that chair the better; we did not want to have them both leaving at a minute's notice; for I was absolutely certain that when I went to bed on Saturday night, the chair was still behind the screen.

I had hitherto pooh-poohed Fannie's fancies about the chair, but I was beginning to think there was something unpleasant about it. We perceived that it was only on Sundays that it perambulated in this disagreeable fashion, and I set myself to circumvent it.

Fannie laughed at my attempts derisively.

"It will not be the least use your trying to stop it. You may just as well let it stand in the window, and save yourself the trouble—you are sure to be bested."

Whenever we left the room for more than ten minutes after moving that detestable bit of furniture, silently, swiftly, it somehow regained its place in the window, giving us a terrible turn when we came back again.

I should have had it taken away into one of the attics or an unused bedroom, in spite of the proviso made by our landlady forbidding any change. But when Fannie remarked that it would only walk downstairs, I shrank from the awful thought; and, moreover, it would then become impossible to keep the knowledge from the servants.

Neither of us could ever remain in that room without the support of the other's company at any time, and on Sundays we took to living in the dining-room—the villa was small, and there was no breakfast-room or study.

Fannie became very restless, and I found she was not sleeping at night. Then she asked if she might change her bedroom.

"But why? The porch room is so tiny, and you will not be so near to me."

"It is next to *her* room, and I don't like it."

"*Her* room! Whatever do you mean by *her*? The room is empty."

"I mean the woman who sits in the chair. The room next mine belongs to her."

"The woman who sits in the chair! You make me feel quite creepy. *Nobody* sits in the chair. And, besides, it might as well be a man," I stammered illogically. "For goodness' sake don't talk like that, or I shall be terrified."

"It is a young woman, I know," said Fannie positively. "There is some history about her, of course, and the landlady must know it, and that is why she has left, and why she will not allow the things to be moved, because she knows that chair would only return and alarm the tenants. If we had let the furniture alone we might not have noticed its behaviour. If the walks were not so charming, and the shore so delightful, I would beg you to leave immediately. But I suppose you will not like to give up the place and go somewhere else?"

I said "No" quite decidedly, for we had only been there a few weeks; but the time came when I was only too glad to retreat, for when the first week of another month began some awful unseen presence seemed to occupy that chair, not only on Sunday, but every day, in its place of observation in the window. And as Fannie announced that she could not, and would not, remain in the room while "that poor thing was sitting there, for if she did, she would one day see her, and then she should faint," we retired permanently to the dining-room.

A spell of rainy weather then set in, which kept us indoors, and Fannie began to look quite pale and thin, while my nerves were getting so shaken that I dared not on any account go up to bed alone.

One morning Elizabeth came and gave notice to leave. The only reason she could assign was that the house was "queer." Of course, the cook followed her example, giving the same reason.

That decided me. We packed up that afternoon, and the next day returned to London.

I wrote a letter to the widow, our landlady, and asked the agent to forward it, and a few weeks after she was kind enough to send me an explanation.

Her husband had died some years ago, leaving her complete control of his fortune. On his deathbed he made her promise that she would never allow their only daughter to marry, as insanity was hereditary in his family, and he had with horror and grief seen too clearly that she was slightly deficient in intellect. His own father had determined not to marry, but had been carried away from his intention by an ardent passion for a young and beautiful neighbour. His father had entreated him to be firmer than he himself had proved, but extracted no promise. Now he repented the blight he had brought on a young life, and earnestly desired that the curse should be extended no further. The mother promised, and had her

daughter carefully educated as far as possible, but kept her secluded from the world, that she might form no attachment.

When she was nearly eighteen, her mother allowed her to go with the governess occasionally to the cottages of a few respectable villagers, to give her interest and occupation. Through this she became acquainted with the curate, and before the widow knew what was going on, they had become passionately attached to each other.

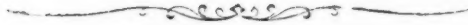
A stop was at once put to their meeting; but the girl pined, and taking a severe cold which developed into consumption, she was confined to the house, and would constantly sit in the west window in her own particular chair, watching the point in the road where she would occasionally see the young man go by, especially on Sundays when he drove past to take the duty at Little Moorton, the two parishes being united.

She was taken abroad, but faded away and died.

The mother returned about a year afterwards, and was horrified to find that her daughter's chair mysteriously resumed the place it had so constantly occupied during her daughter's life. She then shut up the house and went to live in Florence. Serious losses having reduced her income, she decided to let the villa; but the tenants soon left complaining of something strange and unaccountable about the house, and declaring that a certain chair had something so queer about it that they had it locked up in the box-room, but finding it back again in the drawing-room downstairs next day they had all left the house immediately.

She had now decided that she would never let the place again; and whatever it was, it should be left in peace to the melancholy enjoyment—if such a thing could be—of watching from the window uninterrupted and undisturbed.

MIRIAM FORESTER.



## HER KINDRED SPIRIT.

HELENA FARQUHAR was Scotch, with an outward seeming of general indifference, amounting to coldness, towards the world around her. But like many another of northern temperament, the girl's character was moulded on more passionate lines than perhaps she was aware of herself. A trivial circumstance, with momentous results, did something to enlighten her as to her personality, breaking down the barriers of reserve and dignity with which she had encased herself; a reserve and pride born of long inheritance. This was the circumstance which affected her, as nothing in her uneventful life had affected her before. Helena had suddenly met her kindred spirit, her other self, her twin-soul. Not in the flesh did this meeting take place, nor in any materialisation of form, but through the medium of the Press.

Words which burned, words which lived, spoke to her from out a magazine. Only a love poem, and yet it touched its reader as nothing had touched her before, awakening in her heart an echo which astonished, almost awed her, with its strength. Helena had always fancied she lived alone, that everyone lived to themselves, alone with their aspirations and thoughts and their inner life, whatsoever it might be, but which was incommunicable. And now a great awakening had come, and she had heard an echo afar off which responded to the passion lying dormant in her being.

Now—— But Helena Farquhar's thoughts could not be interpreted of human words. Whether this love poem was idealised by her out of all proportion to its actual value is not certain. Anyhow, it was certain that she was very serious about it.

After she had read it, the girl read it again, more slowly this time; then she lay back in her chair, and fell a-dreaming.

Outside, from the windows, she saw a long stretch of gray sky above a gray line of wooded slope and moorland, the monotony of the scene varying only in the foreground by some water, in which the wintry sky was again reflected. A flight of birds wheeled in mid-air, fluttering in uncertain movement, then disappearing out of sight.

Helena gazed at the scene before her in a dual existence as it were, her mind conscious of its surroundings, whilst her fancy was roving in scenes other than those at hand.

Inside the room the firelight played on the old furniture, on the pictures of dead and gone Farquhars showed in deep-set framework, on the bureau with its trim rows of stationery, on a piano littered with music, on a magazine which lay open; and then Helena left her vantage ground of dreaming by the window, and went over to where

that magazine lay. The light from the fire fell full on the poem. For the fourth time she was reading the magic words, when a step sounded along the corridor, and the door of the boudoir was opened. Helena looked up.

"Why, it's you, Allistair!"

"Who else should it be?" answered the young fellow, closing the door behind him. When he reached Helena's side, he bent down and kissed her gently on the forehead; she responded in a passive way, born of habit; the two were betrothed, and they were cousins.

For a minute or two there was silence between them.

"You're vexed with me, I do believe. Am I late?" suggested the newcomer.

"Late? Why, no, Allistair!"—then silence again.

There was a low lounge-chair on the girl's right hand into which she sank, leaning her head back, far into the depths of the soft cushions. The young man took the footstool at her feet; his massive proportions did not lend themselves to the position.

"You can't be comfortable there. Why don't you get into a proper seat, Allistair?" suggested his cousin.

"I have always sat here, Nell—ever since I was a little boy and you a little girl—how many years now?"

"Oh, of course we are near relations, but we have only been engaged the last three weeks, and——" She paused.

"And?" he queried.

"Oh, I don't quite know what I was going to say. Only, isn't it strange that you and I have been destined for one another since our cradles—quite an agricultural union, isn't it, yours and mine? Because our lands touch, our hands should join, as my father says."

Her lover smiled; he was not accustomed to bursts of eloquence of this kind.

"What's all this about?" he suddenly asked; "and all this in reference to?"

"Oh, simply because you said you always sat on the footstool at my feet *because* you had always done so. Oh, can't you see we always do things down here in Scotland just because we have always done so? My dear Allistair, sometimes one longs for the unexpected; for the experience of things we have not felt, or recognised ourselves capable of feeling!"

As she spoke, Helena Farquhar's colour came and went; something strangely strong was evidently swaying the speaker; and something, he could not quite understand what, disarmed the retort which rose to her companion's lips. He ought to have known Helena by now, he thought, and yet this was his betrothed in some new light.

"Helena, what has happened?" he asked. "Who has been putting new ideas into your head? Whom have you met?"

"Met?" she said quickly. "Pray, whom should I meet down here who could put new ideas into my head? No, Allistair; no one you

know or I know has put anything into my head ; if someone has, it is someone neither you nor I know."

The young man took her hand in his as she spoke. "What on earth do you mean, Nell?"

"Oh, I don't suppose for a moment you will understand, for you never read, Allistair ; but it is something I have read which has affected me."

"Oh, something you have read, is it? Then it will pass," he returned.

"I don't wish it to pass," she said.

"But I do, Nell. I never saw you in such a mood. You ask me nothing about myself, or why I am late ; you are not a bit yourself. And such a shoot as we've had, Bellairs and I—why, how many brace of grouse do you think——"

But his *fiancée's* gentle voice interrupted ; she looked away as she spoke.

"Allistair, I hope you and I are really suited for one another. Do you think we have reached the greatest heights it is possible for two persons to reach? Something I have read has set me thinking. It is a poem in that magazine, there, and it is by a man who loves as I should like to be loved."

Her manner was serious. "Oh! Twiddle-di-dee," laughed her lover. "That's what's up, is it? Let me see the poem."

Helena reached across the curly head to the table by the fire. "There it is," she said, as she handed him the magazine. Lord Allistair read it. He was not much of a reader, so he took some little time over it.

"Awfully nice, isn't it," he remarked as he set down the book. "But rather too sentimental for my taste ; I don't call it manly."

"I do," exclaimed the girl. "I call it very manly ; very grand and ennobling. Besides, I think it shows one how very limited human love usually is."

"My love, dear—is that what you are driving at?" asked the man a shadow passing over his face. Helena did not reply. He put his question again ; she turned her head away, avoiding his eyes.

"Perhaps I had better leave you to think matters over ; you are a little morbid, Nell, to-day. Very likely it's the weather, added to that unhealthy habit of yours of sticking indoors and reading boshy books, when you ought to be out in the air. Come and shoot to-morrow with me ; that will knock this rubbish out of your head. No? You won't? Well, I'm off now ; and when you want me, write."

The door closed on him ; but Helena did not regret her silence ; she barely realised they had not parted in a friendly manner ; her thoughts were engrossed in another direction. She had pondered it all well over, and was certain, now, that she had met her Kindred Spirit ; the one person whose words appealed to her ; and that person was not Lord Allistair.

When she came back to her boudoir that evening, after dinner, she had told her father that there was something she had to do ; this would explain her absence from the long library, where she and her father generally sat. And now, back in her snug little room, Helena Farquhar set her face in a stern earnestness hitherto unknown. She had been turning something over in her thoughts, and now she had made up her mind quite definitely she was going to introduce herself to the writer of the love poem. She wished she knew him ; they had so much in common now that the magical influence of his verse had acted upon her and awakened her inner life.

"Such a debt as that," she wrote, putting her thoughts into pen and ink, "can barely go unacknowledged. I am a young girl living in the far North, among a race of people who do not talk, even if they feel. You have shown me to what heights human love can aspire ; your words have gone very deeply into my soul ; I am no longer content with letting things be as they were around me ; I wish to love as your Elaine loves, to be loved as your Humbert loved. You have done a noble thing in pointing out to the world what love can be. I, for one, am grateful to you for the revelation. Your words have been a lamp to me, it was all darkness before you showed me the way, but I was groping, I expect, always, or I should not have recognised the light when it came."

A little more from Helena's pen, and then she read what she had written. It surprised her a little ; it was not quite like her usual language ; it struck her as being an inspiration. She addressed it to E. Herbert, Esq.—the love poem was signed with that name—care of Calverley & Co., Publishers, London.

Postal arrangements were not a strong point at Helena's home. Neither Helena nor the old Laird cared much for correspondence, nor, indeed, had they any worthy of being so called. It was only when Moles Castle was full that any attention was caused by the frequent absence of the post-bag. MacDougall's services were as often required as under-keeper as postman.

In the days following on Helena's letter to her unknown poet she thought of little else but MacDougall. She had never hung on the old man's comings and goings before ; and as day after day went by and no letter came, her heart sank within her. "Perhaps she had done the wrong thing ? Perhaps she ought not to have written ? Everyone would write who had read those words—the Queen herself would."

At last, all doubts and fears were dispelled, a large square envelope was placed in her hand. The great man had stooped from his height and had deigned to acknowledge her note.

"Dear Madam," it ran, "I thank you very heartily for your letter. It has given me deep pleasure, deeper than you know. It is not always given to us to make our fellow-beings happy. In assuring me

I have affected you in this way, you give me of all pleasures the greatest. If I have awakened your soul, do not let it slumber any more. In love we must aim high, there are no limits to it. But you are young, and I who write to you am young no longer. I have known what it is to be exalted, as Elaine and Humbert were in my love poem. It was no idle dream of the impossible, but it was the possible, and it was from life I wrote. Perhaps one day you will realise for yourself that such love is not a vain imagining. You say you are not content with your surroundings. That is the first great lesson to learn—the lesson of discontent; for, if we are great, and if we are strong, after the knowledge of our needs comes their supplying. I write at this length because I am hoping this may be of service to you. You have helped me by your kind, encouraging words."

Yes, Helen Farquhar had learnt her lesson of discontent, which grew daily; the poet's letter emphasizing it all the more. The breach between her lover and herself seemed to increase, to widen. She did not regret his absence, she barely noticed it. The thought of her kindred spirit was ever with her—when she raced over the moorland on the gray pony, when she dreamed day-dreams over her fire, the same thought was ever uppermost. And Allistair had said, "it would pass!" What nonsense men talk! Not all men though; not her poet. Once or twice she wrote some letters to him; she did not always send them, but she wrote them.

Helena had arrived at that stage of a young girl's life when the desire to "express" herself is almost out of proportion to the "expression;" and, in common with those whose earnestness carries them away, she lost sight of all other feelings. About this time her household duties were executed in a manner not wholly above criticism. The father saw little or nothing of his daughter. Helena was gradually separating herself from her surroundings; the estrangement grew rather than waned.

To such letters as she sent her poet, he replied in ever ready punctuality. In the last letter he had said: "And after so much correspondence it would be nice if we could meet; we have much in common—our views, our tastes, and now our ideals. But you live in the far north, I in the south."

"But that is nothing," wrote back Helena. "I wish to see you. I wish to ask your advice on a very momentous question which will affect all my future life. If I come up to London—we have an empty barrack of a house there—will you stretch out your hand and help me? Is it bold of me to write this? I am surprised at myself, it is so unconventional; but your words have made me loathe conventionality. I have broken down the barriers which Society has set up, you see. And yet I surprise myself in so doing."

Helena made her plans to go to London; nothing could dissuade

her. The ostensible reason which she gave to her father and her maid for this visit was that she needed to order clothes for her trousseau.

She had not seen her *fiancé* since the all-memorable day when a few printed words had awakened her mind. The birthday of a soul, she called it to herself: that sacred day. Allistair had said, "When you want me, write;" and, accordingly, she had not written.

The day before her departure for the south a letter came by post from the Kindred Spirit she was going to meet, the man who was to help her mould her future career, the one man in the universe, just then, for her. And this was what he wrote:

"DEAR MADAM,—Your kind and generous letters have placed me in a difficult position; one I think I ought to enter into before we meet. You have always assumed I am a man, whereas, I am a woman. Ought I to have told you this before? Cannot a woman help a woman? Kindred spirits be of kindred sex? I wish immensely to see you, and to give you any advice born of the experience which gray hair gives. My husband and I are alike keen in our wish to see you. We shall come and call at Eaton Place in three days' time as you suggest, and meanwhile, and ever,

"Believe me, etc."

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Somehow or other—it was never quite clearly explained why—the London visit never came off. Helena instead sent for her *fiancé*. They had been married a year or so when his wife confided to him. First he had to promise that he would not laugh at her, and never, never allude to it again all the days of their life. Then, nestling against his shoulder, she told him without any abbreviations the serio-comic history of her Kindred Spirit.

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